LADY PENELOPE

MORLEY ROBERTS

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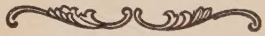
LADY PENELOPE

THE WORKS OF

MORLEY ROBERTS



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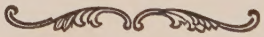

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LADY PENELOPE BRADING
Who had ideas of her own

Lady Penelope

By

Morley Roberts

Author of "Rachel Marr," "The Promotion of the Admiral," etc.

Illustrated by

Arthur William Brown

Boston ❧ L. C. Page & Company ❧ *Mdccccv*

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

PAGE

LADY PENELOPE BRADING . . . . *Frontispiece*
Who had ideas of her own.

CAPTAIN PLANTAGENET GOBY, V. C., LATE OF THE GUARDS 44
Who was ordered to read poetry

LEOPOLD NORFOLK GORDON 72
Some said his real name was Isaac Levi.

AUSTIN DE VERE 86
He wrote poetry, and abhorred bulldogs and motor-cars.

THE MARQUIS DE RIVAULX 174
Anti-Semite to his manicured finger-tips.

RUFUS Q. PLANT 202
Born in Virginia.

CARTERET WILLIAMS, WAR CORRESPONDENT . . 230
He wrote with a red picturesqueness which was horribly attractive.

JIMMY CAREW, A. R. A. 318
He was the best looking of the whole "horde"

THE EARL OF PULBOROUGH 361
Clever; but indolent.

LADY PENELOPE

CHAPTER I.

All the absurd birthday celebrations were over, and Penelope was twenty-one.

She declared that her whole life was to be devoted to reform. She meant to reform society, to make it good and useful and straightforward, and simple and utterly delightful.

She let it be understood that men were in great need of her particular attention. They were too selfish and self-centred, too extravagant, too critical of each other, too vain. They acknowledged it humbly when she mentioned it, for Lady Penelope Brading's beauty was something to see and to talk of; major and minor poets agreed about it; artists desired to paint her and failed, as they always do when true loveliness shines on them. She had the colour of a Titian; the contours of a Correggio; the witchery of a Reynolds, and under wonderful

raiment the muscles of a young Greek athlete. She wiped out any society in which she moved. When sweet Eclipse showed herself, the rest were nowhere. The other girls did not exist; she even made married beauties quake; as for the men, they endured everything she said, and worshipped her all the more. She was strange and new and a tonic. She had no sense of humour whatsoever; she could not understand a joke even if it was explained by an expert on the staff of *Punch*. This made her utterly delightful. Her beautiful seriousness was as refreshing as logic in a sermon. She believed in clergymen, in politicians, in the Deceased Wife's Sister, in all eminent physicians, in the London County Council, in the City of Westminster, in the British Constitution, in herself, and hygiene. She read the *Times*, the *Athenæum*, the Encyclopædia Britannica, Herbert Spencer, Mr. Kidd, and the late Mr. Drummond. She used Sandow's exercises and cold water. She was opposed to war; she admired the leader of the opposition and the lord mayor; she subscribed to a society for establishing a national theatre to play Mr. Bernard Shaw's tragedies, and to the nearest hospital. She was the most delightful person in England, and was against vaccination. She had money and lands and houses and ideas.

"We ought all to do something; to be something," said Lady Penelope Brading.

It was an amazing statement, a shocking statement, and clean against all class tradition when she interpreted it to the alarmed. Was it not to be something if one was rich, let us say? Was it not to do something if one spent one's money on horses and sport and dress and bridge? Heaven defend us all if anything more is asked of man or woman than killing time and killing beasts! Hands went up to heaven when Penelope preached.

Not that she preached at length. Her sermons lasted five seconds by any clock, save at the times when she warmed her ankles by the fire with some pet friend of hers, and took into consideration how she was to use her power for the regeneration of the world which was hers. Now she was with Ethel Mytton, a remote relative of the celebrated Mytton who drank eight bottles of port a day, and was a sportsman of the character which makes all Englishmen prouder of sport than of their history. Ten thousand on a football field would put him higher than Sir Richard Grenville. Sidney was a fool to him. Her father was a cabinet minister.

But Ethel was meek and mild, and followed Penelope at a humble distance, modelling herself on that sweet mould of revolution. So might a

penny candle imitate an arc-light; so a glowworm worship the big moon.

"But you'll get married, dear," said Ethel, "of course you'll get married."

Penelope was pensive.

"There are other things than marriage," said Penelope.

"Oh, are there?" sighed Ethel. She did not think so, for she was in love. Penelope loved theories best.

"Which of them will you marry?" asked Ethel.

"Which what?"

"Silly, them," said Ethel. "What the duchess calls your 'horde.'"

"I don't know," replied Penelope. "I'm like Diogenes, and I'm looking for an honest man."

"Oh, honesty, — yes, of course, I know what you mean. But there are plenty of them, Pen dear."

"Boo!" said Pen; "so the other Greeks said to the man in the tub."

Ethel sighed.

"What Greeks and what man in what tub?" she inquired, plaintively.

And Penelope did not enlighten her darkness, for in came the Duchess of Goring, her aunt, whose Christian name was Titania. She weighed sixteen stone in glittering bead armour, and had a voice

exactly like Rose Le Clerc's in "The Duchess of Bayswater." She rarely stopped talking, and was ridiculously moral and conventional, and, except for her voice, she might have been a shopkeeper's wife in any suburb.

"My dear Penelope," said Titania, "I'm glad to see you again. You look positively sweet, my darling, after all these parties and carryings-on, and what not, and now at last you are quite grown up and yourself and your own and twenty-one. I wish I was. I was nine stone then exactly, — not a pound more. Oh, and it's you, Ethel. I hope your dear papa is not overworking himself, now he's a cabinet minster. Cabinet ministers will overwork themselves. I've known them die of it. Tell him what I say, will you? But of course he will pay no attention, and in time will die like the rest. It's no use advising men to be sensible. I've given it up. Ah, here at last is Lord Bradstock."

Titania flowed on wonderfully; she flowed exactly like the twisting piece of glass in a mechanical clock which mimics a jet of water. She turned round and never advanced. But Augustin, Lord Bradstock, was as calm as a mill-pond, as a mere in the mountains. He was tall and thin and ruddy and white-haired at fifty. He had been twice a widower.

"Why at last, Titania?" he yawned, as he stood with Penelope's hand in his. He was still her guardian in his heart, though she was out of tutelage.

"I say at last, Augustin, because you were not here before me," cried Titania. "And I expected you to be here before me from what you said this morning. I told you I meant to come in and speak quietly and seriously to Penelope, and you said you would come, too."

Penelope's eyes thanked her guardian, and they smiled at him half-secretly, saying as plain as any words: "What a dear you are to come in and dilute aunty for me!"

"Yes," said Bradstock, "I think I said I would prepare her."

"I've not had a single chance lately to say a word for her good," cried Titania, "what with this person and that person and the horde. I think it is time now, Penelope, that you reorganized your amazing circle of acquaintances, mostly men, by the way. While Augustin was responsible for you, of course you were obstinate, but now you are in a position of greater freedom you will see the advisability of being guided by your aunt. I'm sure, I'm positive of it."

Now the real sore point with the duchess was

this matter of the "horde." It was the only picturesque phrase she ever invented in her life, and without any doubt it did characterize in some measure the remarkable collection of men who were pretenders to Penelope's hand and fortune.

"Out of the entire, the entire —"

"Caboodle," said Bradstock, suggestively.

The duchess shook her head like a horse in fly-time.

"No, Augustin, not caboodle; pray, what is caboodle? Out of the entire — lot, Penelope, there are hardly three who belong to your class. I entreat you to go through them and dismiss those of whom we can't approve, I and Lord Bradstock."

"Don't drag me in," said Bradstock. "They are all very good fellows; I approve of them all."

"Tut, tut," said Titania, "is this the way you help, Augustin? You are a hindrance. I believe it is entirely owing to you that Penelope has these strange and alarming ideas. Yes, my dear, I'm afraid it is. He is not the kind of man who should have been your guardian. I ought to have been consulted. I knew a bishop who would have been admirable, most admirable. He's dead, dear man, and the present one is a scandal to the Protestant Church, what with incense and processions and candles and confession-boxes. But, as I was saying,

I do hope you will dismiss some of these men. And I hope you will be sensible and not say shocking things. No one should say shocking things till they are married, and even then with discretion. Socialism and reform and marriage! Dear me, you really must not talk about marriage, but you must get married to a suitable person. I'm sure, Augustin, we should have no insuperable objection to, let us say, young Bramber. He'll be an earl by and by. And you mustn't talk about reforming society, my dear love. It is quite impossible to reform society without abolishing it, my pet. Ethel darling, many cabinet ministers have owned as much to me with much alarm, almost with tears. It's no use trying. Tell your dear father so, Ethel. I forgot to mention it the other day when we discussed the London County Council and its terrible extravagance compared with the economy of the government. We talked, too, about the War Office, and I told him that it couldn't be reformed without abolishing it, which was not to be thought of for an instant. What should we do without a War Office, as we are always fighting? He sighed deeply, poor man. Dr. Lumsden Griff says sighing is cardiac in its origin, and I wish your father would see him, Ethel. He's the first doctor in London for the ventricles

of the heart. So every one says. But about your ideas, Penelope — "

"Good heavens, aunty, I haven't any left," said Penelope. This was not in the least surprising, for Titania reduced any ordinary gathering to idiocy at the shortest notice.

"Oh, but you have," said Titania, "and society cannot endure ideas, my love. Anything but ideas, darling."

"Well, well," sighed Bradstock, "what is the use of talking to her, Titania? Pen is Pen, and there's an end of it."

"I wish there was," cried the duchess. "But she rails against marriage. And she's only twenty-one. Dear, dear me!"

"She pays too much attention to you married women," said Bradstock. "How's the duke, by the way?"

As the duke was engaged in running two theatres at the same time, not wholly in the interests of art or finance, Bradstock might have asked after his health at some other juncture. Titania ignored him.

"She rails against marriage," lamented Titania.

"I don't," said Penelope.

"You do," said her aunt.

"It's only the horrible publicity," said Penelope,

"and the way things are done, and the ghastly presents and the bishops and the newspaper men and the horrible crowd outside and the worse crowd inside, and all the horrid fluff and flummery of it. If I'm ever married, I'll get it done in a registrar's office."

"Oh, Penelope," wailed Ethel.

But Titania became terrible.

"You shall not be, Penelope," she cried. "I could not stand it. As your aunt, my dear — Oh, my love, I knew some one who was married in that way, and it was a most shocking affair, and of course it turned out that he had been married before and was a bigamist. The scandal was hushed up, and the first wife, who was the sweetest girl, and died of consumption shortly afterward at her father's vicarage in Kent or Yorkshire, near Pevensey or Pontefract; at any rate it began with a P, and the man, though a villain, was a gentleman, for he married the second one all over again in a foreign place, with a chaplain officiating; much better than a registrar, who can marry you, I'm told, in pajamas if he likes, though not like a bishop, which one might have expected in his case. You all knew him slightly, at any rate. Never, my dear, get married at a registrar's."

"It's better than the open shame of a cathedral

and a bishop," said Penelope. "Being married is one's private business, and it's nothing but horrid savagery to have crowds there!"

"Bravo!" said Bradstock, and Titania turned on him.

"Did I not say all this was your fault, Augustin? You were no more fit to be her guardian than you are to be Archbishop of Canterbury. Am I a savage, Penelope? and did I not get married in a cathedral, a most beautiful cathedral, all Gothic and newly restored at a vast expense? My dear, I am amazed and horrified and shocked to think that you should not perceive the quite exquisite fitness of being married in a piece of lovely Gothic architecture, to the very loveliest music, breathing over Eden, and so on, while all your dearest friends shed tears of purest joy —"

"To see her got rid of," said Bradstock.

And even Ethel Mytton laughed.

"Augustin! Ethel Mytton! How can you say such things and laugh? It's wicked; it's indecent!"

"Yes," said Penelope, "that's what I say. There's nothing to choose between your way and the American way the millionaire women have over there, when they hold a flower-show in a gilded room, and get married under a bell of roses at the cost of a hundred thousand dollars. I'd rather be

knocked down by a nice savage, or run away with by a viking, or caught by a pirate. I won't be breathed over in Eden by a stuffy crowd. If — if — "

"Oh, if what?" gasped Titania.

"If I ever do get married," said Penelope, "I'll never tell any of you beforehand!"

"Good heavens!" said the duchess, "you won't tell us?"

"I won't."

"You'll let us find out! Shall I know nothing of the marriage of my brother's child till I read it in the *Times?* It shall not be! Augustin, does she mean it?"

Augustin lighted a cigarette and walked to the window, which looked down on the traffic of Piccadilly.

"I give it up," said Augustin. "When could I answer riddles? Do you mean it, Pen?"

And Penelope, rising up, stood on the hearth-rug and, looking like the descendant of a viking and some fair Venetian, declared that she did mean it. And she further went on to say, in great haste and with a most remarkable flow of words, that it shouldn't be in the *Times* or any other paper. And she said that if Titania, Duchess of Goring, was her aunt, it couldn't be helped, and that her

principles were more to her than any one's approval. Though she loved her aunt and her dear sweet guardian, these same principles were even dearer than they were. And she said that they had no principles ("not even Guardy dear"), and that they only thought of a demon thing called Society, which was at once a fetich and a phantom. And she became so excited that she talked like a real woman orator upon a platform, and expressed her intention of using her influence to bring about reform, especially in such matters and with regard to young men who did nothing, and seemed to think they had been created for that very purpose. And, as she talked, there wasn't a man in the world who would not have yearned to take his coat off and ask for a pick and shovel at the least, for she was as beautiful as any young goddess fresh from Grecian foam or from high Olympus. Even Bradstock sighed to think that he had never done anything for the human race, which required so much help, but sit in the Upper House, a speechless phantom. And Ethel Mytton cried with an imparted enthusiasm, while the duchess wept with horror.

"And more than that," said Penelope, who broke down in her eloquence and resorted to the tone of conversation, "more than that, I'll never, never

let you know whom I marry! I mean it! That — that's flat!"

And after this damp but awful peroration, she sat down with heaving bosom, and poor, bewildered Titania shook her head till it looked as if it would come off. She found no flow of words to oppose Penelope with. The biggest river is nothing when it flows into the sea, and, if Titania was the Amazon, Pen was the South Atlantic.

"Not who he is?" said the duchess, as feebly as if she were no more than a brook in a meadow.

"I will not," said Penelope, like a sea in a cyclone.

"Not — Oh, I must go home," piped Titania. "Augustin, she's capable of marrying a chauffeur, because he can drive at sixty miles an hour, — or — or a groom!"

"I'd rather marry either or both," said Pen, furiously, "than be mobbed and musicked into matrimony with a grinning crowd of idiots looking on."

"This is immoral," said Titania, "it's very immoral; you couldn't marry both. I'll go home, Bradstock."

And Bradstock took her there.

"You've done it, Titania," he said, as they drove. "She's as obstinate and as violent as a passive

resister. You've put her bristles up, and Pen never goes back from what she says."

"You are very like a man, Augustin," sobbed the duchess.

"She's more like a woman than I'm like a man," growled Bradstock.

He had never risen to eminence, and only once to his feet in the Upper House, and sometimes this rankled.

"Yes, I mean it, I mean it," said Penelope.

"And I wanted to be your bridesmaid," sobbed Ethel.

"You never will be, and you can tell every one what I say."

"I won't," said Ethel, "I won't."

And she went away and told them.

CHAPTER II.

In spite of what good conventional people said, there was nothing abnormal in Penelope's character. The walking world appears abnormal to an institute for cripples; good going is an absurdity, and as for running — The truth is that Penelope, by some unimaginable freak of fortune, had been born quite sound and sane, barring her one lack, that of humour. The providential death of her parents at an early age saved her from a deal of teaching. Bradstock saved her from a great deal more, and she saw to the rest. It pleased Augustin, Lord Bradstock, to play with gunpowder, in spite of what he said about dynamite. He encouraged her to trust to herself in a way that every well-regulated woman considered highly dangerous, and he used to enrage her in order to hear what she had to say to him. There was a period in which she swore vigorously. She learnt her language from an old stableman, who adored her even more than he did any horse. This was at the age of three. Her first

interview with her aunt, the Duchess of Goring, was positively so shocking to Titania, who was mid-Victorian, and never got over it, that the poor thing almost fainted when Penelope, a shining brat of three, damned her eyes with terrific vigour. Goring, who was that very curious and absurd survival of a thousand ages, known as a sportsman, roared with laughter. There was humanity in him. There was none in Titania, though there might have been if she had married any one but a duke. And Penelope damned her eyes for saying she mustn't go to the stables without a retinue, an escort, a bodyguard of footmen and nurses and governesses.

"I haven't a governeth now," lisped Penelope. "I thacked the latht one, didn't I, Bradstock?"

Lady Bradstock, number two, was then reigning without governing as far as Bradstock was concerned, and governing without reigning as far as another was concerned, and she paid no attention to Penelope, except to encourage her to amuse her guardian. Thus Penelope grew like a tree in the open, and there were no Dutch gardeners to clip her. At fifteen she greeted her last governess, a lady of great learning and no ability, with the news that she had had her luggage got ready, and that there was the carriage at the door for her. There is no defending such conduct. Pen never defended

it herself in later years. She acknowledged she had been a brute to Miss Mackarness, and gave her a position as housekeeper in one of her own houses, that she never visited, with permission to receive the shillings some visitors paid to see a mansion like a sarcophagus, with one treasure of a Turner in it.

The trouble was that Penelope was natural. She had not been trained to become so; she grew so. There is no more painful and laborious a process than to learn to be natural in later life. But to grow like it! Ah, that was splendid, and many unthinking people laughed to hear Pen when she swore, or cried, or begged for pardon, or dominated the whole little world around her. The world indeed smiled on Pen, and now she was twenty-one and splendid, mobile, gracious, Venetian, strong, and as rich as an American heiress, and she already had as many wooers as Penelope of old. But the little bow of Cupid was too much for them. Or her defence was too good. And now these strange notions grew up in her. There was some natural shame in her heart that the crowd of duchesses and what not could not understand. When He came at last, riding gallantly, a brave male, virile, strong, and bold, armed in shining armour, should she lead him out into Piccadilly, investing him in a frock

coat for his armour and a cylinder for his helmet, and marry him in a crowd, while a paid organist played something about Eden? Oh, where was Eden?

Here's romance then, and in a new guise in a young woman. For the true romantic age is the age of feminine desperation. When one has been "taught" all one's best years, it's hard to be romantic till one wears through one's fetters at the very foot of the scaffold, when it's too late. How many sweet women sour in cream-jugs, and escape the cat, or some roaring lion, for nothing but sourest contemplation. They crowd feminine churches.

Pen's brother, or, rather, half-brother, was ten years her senior, and played a suitable part in the orchestra of the House of Lords as Lord Brading. He voted for the government when it was conservative, and against it when it was liberal with perfect certainty and good-will. There was nothing remarkable about Brading but the strange, almost awestruck admiration with which he worshipped Penelope. A man even of the most absurd conservative solidity must be a radical and an anarchist somewhere, and indeed he pretended to be something of a socialist. Nevertheless, he had humour. Brading thought his half-sister a wonder, and had no criticism for her. Indeed it is believed

that he helped the groom mentioned above to teach her unrefinements of the English language peculiarly shocking to early and mid Victorians. But in his heart "Bill" Brading considered Pen's mother accounted for, excused everything. The last Lady Brading was an American who wallowed in money, which she invested in repairing her husband's character and his castles. When he died, and nothing could be done for his character but suppress biographers, she invested in ancient demesnes on Pen's behalf, and bought her rat-riddled and ghost-haunted mansions of historic character till there were few (and among them Penelope could not be counted) who could tell how many of them she owned. Then Lady Brading went to a newer world than the United States, and left Pen to the care of Augustin, Lord Bradstock, a man of brains and no voice when on his legs. It is reported that he learnt a speech of his own composing by heart, and when he rose to deliver it all he said was, "Good God," in an astonished whisper, and collapsed, struck by a form of paralysis which rarely attacks fools and which bores cannot suffer from.

Penelope was richer than her half-brother, for her mother, having paid her husband's debts, rebuilt Brading House, and saved his life from being written after a very quiet and gentlemanly departure,

considered she had done her duty to the family. She left her stepson five thousand pounds, it is true, and, with a want of ostentation not peculiarly American, she left another five to Penelope, and modestly made her residuary legatee. The residue was considerably over a million dollars. And then there were the houses, most of them ineligible properties in ring-fences, fit for immediate occupation after they had been restored. For poor Lady Brading had a passion for ruins, and collected castles as some do bric-à-brac. The two great griefs of her life were that she could not buy Haddon Hall and Arundel Castle.

Well, there is the situation plainly outlined. Pen was as savage as Pocahontas, so some said, and she could, an she liked, wallow in money. She owned property all over England, to say nothing of a château near Tours, a palazzo in Venice, and a building in New York which brought in more than the rest cost to keep up. She had a brother, a peer with a voice, a guardian a peer without one, an aunt who was a duchess, and strange ideas of her own which got up and talked on the most unsuitable occasions.

But then there was her beauty as clamant as a rose of fire, as sweet as violet or verbena! The rose can be gilded it seems, like a lily, and the gold

was a power to her, giving authority over men. She who had enough to command the work of many thousands at current wages (for this is money truly) commanded that strange respect for power as well as love for herself. Her lovers were numberless, so people said, and there was this truth in their being beyond arithmetic that no one troubled to count them. Marriageable beauties of a lesser order of loveliness prayed for her extinction in matrimony. Mothers of the marriageable prayed for it with a fervour only equalled by the fervour of her hopeless lovers, if there can be fervour without hope. It is the command of true beauty that it can. Had not all the painters, all the sculptors, from Pheidias down to the unselected classics of our own time, met together when she rose, a newer Aphrodite from the sea of the unknown! Her loveliness was sweet and intolerable; one ached at it. Cowards shrank from it. Brave men cried for her. There are strange tales!

What a strange motley gathering she selected. They had one thing in common, to be discovered shortly, one would think. She discovered their qualities by inspection. Many would-bes she drove away overcliff. She knew men of many classes adored her, wondering and humble. One great lover of hers, who was very good to horses, and

only reasonably bitter against motor-cars, was her groom, Timothy Bunting. He didn't know he loved her. Indeed, he imagined he loved her maid. But there is this quality in a great love, that it asks all or nothing. Tim was perhaps as great as the greatest, but he rode behind her even when the Marquis de Rivaulx or Rufus Q. Plant rode alongside her with a quiet and unjealous mind. There was much in Timothy, as much or more than there was in the French marquis, who rode "well enough," as Tim said, or as in Plant, who rode "all over 'is 'orse," as became one bred in Arizona. These must show themselves by and by. They had *the* quality, at any rate. Even Tim knew it.

But what was it that gave permission to Mr. Austin de Vere to join the throng? He wrote poetry. He followed her as close as a rhyme in a couplet. He never wrote her any, for which she was pleased to be flatteringly thankful. There are some things that cannot be set down in verse even by the greatest, and the poet De Vere acknowledged this humbly. He had the character of being the most conceited and immitigable ass in England, and when he was with Penelope he was as humble as a puppy in leash. There was something great in his mighty subjection. Not even Goby, late of the Guards, was so mitigable and so mitigated

when Pen was by. And Goby's V. C. was almost as much valued by him as his clothes and boots. He gained it by a fit of angry rage, such as had led him to pay several sovereigns at a desk in a back office at a police-station, and came out of his temper to discover he was a hero. So much for luck when a big man, with the quality and temper of a bull, gets into a row in a sangar without any police to stay his hand.

"As for that De Vere," said Goby, "why, I could crush him with one hand."

"And he could make you sore with a few words," said Penelope.

"He couldn't," bragged Goby.

Penelope smiled.

"No, perhaps he couldn't," she said, pensively, and Goby was pleased with her opinion of his bull's hide. Europa had at any rate scratched him. He indicated the sea of matrimony with inarticulate bellows. But of course he was really quite possible. As Chloe Cadwallader said, his boots were inspiration, polished, and his Christian name was Plantagenet. He had some obscure right to it.

Then there was Lord Bramber. Some folks said if she married any one, she would marry Bramber, because his father was the Earl of Pulborough. They forgot all the rest of the aristocratic mob.

If any title pleased her democratic soul, she could pick strawberries. One senile and one merely silly duke pursued her panting. But she certainly liked Bramber, and showed her partiality for him or her unpartiality with frankness. She had hopes of him, though he appeared hopeless now at the age of twenty-seven. She maintained that men were half their age and women twice it, at the least.

"Dear Titania is ninety," said Penelope, "and Guardy is twenty-five. Lord Bramber will perhaps think of doing some work when he is fifteen."

There came with these, with and not after, Jimmy Carew, who was an A. R. A. He painted portraits, and talked about art with eloquence till no one, even an artist, could guess what he meant. But he believed things with such faith that many of his fair sitters agreed with him. He was the best looking of the whole "horde," as Titania called Pen's adorers.

The "horde" included Leopold Norfolk Gordon, who had a house in Park Lane and ever so many people's money to keep it up with. As may be guessed from his name, he was a Jew. Several people, with whom he could not share the money he had acquired by unsullied dishonesty, said his real name was Isaac Levi. Goby, who hated him

bitterly, consoled him when a less successful Israelite called him "Ikey," at Ascot, by saying:

"It's damned hard lines, Gordon. A man may be born in Whitechapel without being a Jew."

So near may insolence come to wit. When this was pointed out to Goby, he told the story everywhere with many chuckles. But it was impossible to deny certain attributes to poor Gordon, whether his name was Levi or Moses, or Ehrenbreitstein, for that matter. Penelope had no racial prejudices, and anti-Semitism was unnatural and abhorrent to her. She said things about negroes to Rufus Q. Plant (born in Virginia) which made his flesh creep almost as badly as if he had been born in Delaware. So in spite of Gordon's looking somewhat Semitic, she asserted there were the qualities she required in the poor man, who indeed was not bumptious or loud or peculiarly offensive in her presence. He that stole millions feared a girl. He polished his last week's hat with trembling hands, that had signed death-warrants in the city, when he spoke with her.

And to round off the "horde" with another sample, there came in Carteret Williams. He was the biggest of the lot, and had a voice like a toastmaster's, or that of the man who announces the train at Zurich. It is worth going there to hear

him, by the way. Many good Americans travel for less. Williams was a writer, a journalist, a war-correspondent, or, as he said, a "battle vulture." When he could dip his pen in blood, he wrote with a red picturesqueness which was horribly attractive. He belonged to a very decent family, and took to his present trade by nature. That gives some hint of why Penelope liked him.

What was the secret, then, the secret that brought young Bramber, and Rufus Quintus Plant, and "Ikey Levi," *alias* Leopold Norfolk Gordon, and Captain Plantagenet Goby, and the verse-making De Vere, together with the Marquis de Rivaulx and Jimmy Carew, under one table-cloth, so to speak, at the Tattenham Corner of wooing? Some said Penelope wouldn't have anything to do with any one who was not a Man. It is true she abhorred those who were not men; but so much depends upon a definition. In the West (and the East, for that matter) a Man goes for what he is worth, and is common currency, as he should be, and a "White Man" is the gold. To be called a White Man is the true compliment, and implies, — well, it implies what the "horde" implied. They were men and Man, and "White," so Penelope said when she had picked up the picturesque figure from Rufus Q. Plant. They might be asses (and some

were, or at least mules), but they meant to run straight. They were lazy, or some were, but the laziest lay under the delusion that laziness was their godlike duty. They needed the spur. They might be brutes in the way of business (you should read what has been written in a New York paper about Plant, or hear what a certain disembowelled set in the city say of Gordon, who turned them inside out), but they played the game. They knew what cricket was, even when it was played with red-hot shot, and not to carry one's bat meant blue ruin. After saying that they were all this, which implies they were men of honour, each according to the code of their fellows (for this is honour), I shall show you how they came, or how many of them came, to utter grief in curious ways under very odd stresses. What can a man of honour do in an entirely new position, one not provided for in any code? It would puzzle a jury of archangels to say.

"Have you heard?" asked Goby, with wondering eyes.

"What she says?" replied Gordon.

"Shade of Titian!" cried Jimmy Carew.

"Well, I'm damned!" said Carteret Williams.

"This is romance," sighed the De Vere.

"I'm — I'm — that's what I am," whistled Rufus Q. Plant.

"Imphm!" murmured Lord Bramber.

"Sapristi!" shrieked the French marquis.

Wasn't it enough to make them exclaim when it was reported all over London, and in the country, and in papers and cables to New York that Penelope Brading had sworn, with a great oath, that she meant to upset the holy apple-cart of all tradition (at least since Adam) by never letting any one know who her husband was! They knew her, and knew her word was sacred. Now let all unwhite men, all unrealities, all ghosts, all vain folks vanish one by one.

With one voice the "horde" exclaimed, as they set their teeth:

"Well, we don't care!"

What does this say for Penelope's faculties of distinguishing men from monkeys, and white from gray?

CHAPTER III.

All that happened now only shows one how the greatest sense of modesty may end in the biggest advertisement. Penelope, though determined to do her duty, which was mainly to educate mankind, meant doing it unobtrusively, and there was not a man or woman in the British Isles or in the United States who did not hear of her quiet intention. The cables hummed with Penelope's name; it was whispered in the great deeps of the sea; wireless telegraphists caught Lady Penelope Brading out of Hertzian waves; ships ploughed the ocean laden with Penelope and copy about her.

In two twos the notoriety hunters in London sank into insignificance; professional beauties were neglected, and the sale of their photographs fell off. There was an immense demand for Penelope's, which, luckily, no one could satisfy until an enterprising New Yorker flooded the United States with portraits. Before it was found out that this particular photograph was one of a young actress

whom he proposed introducing to the public shortly, he sold amazing quantities of them. When there was one in every inquiring household from Hudson Bay to the Gulf of Mexico, the real sitter for it wrote to the papers and complained bitterly. She is now playing to crowded houses. There are many paths to fame.

Poor Pen was at first horribly shocked. She was young. And yet she was human. She said: "Oh, dear, oh, dear!" and, swearing that she would never read a word about herself, she subscribed to a newspaper cutting agency.

From the New York papers alone one could cull a highly coloured account of her whole history. And they gave Bradstock's history, too, not omitting his two-word exclamatory speech in the House of Lords. Bradstock stood it like a Trojan, like a Spartan. He never turned a hair even when they said that he was going to marry Penelope himself. They gave a full biography of Titania, with a real photograph. When the duchess saw it, she was silent for full five minutes, such was the shock it gave her. Then she talked for five hours, and called on the American ambassador.

"Cannot you do anything for me?" asked Titania, perorating.

"I'm afraid not, your Grace," said the ambas-

sador, wearily. He said it was an awful thing to be an ambassador sometimes, though it had its points.

Being discomfited for once by an ambassador, she turned on Bradstock, and rent him limb from limb. And then she went to Penelope.

"I'm only doing my duty," said Penelope, with her beautiful lips as firm as Grecian marble.

"Your duty!" shrieked the duchess; "and look at the papers!"

"I can't help what they say, aunt. One's duty —"

"They tell my weight," said Titania. "How did they know?"

"They must have guessed it," said Penelope.

"I don't *look* it," pleaded the duchess, now suddenly plaintive.

"No, no, dear auntie, you don't," said poor Penelope. "Oh, it's cruel of them."

"Help me, then," said Titania. "Get married at once in a cathedral, and all this will stop. I'll ask the dear archbishop to officiate, Penelope. Oh, my darling!"

But Penelope became Pentelican marble again; she froze into a severe goddess, and she saw Titania weep.

"It's scandalous! Oh, and they have a list of them all," said Titania.

Indeed, the *New York Dustman* had the "horde" set out in a row like the entries for the Derby. They said the betting was on Rufus Q. Plant, of course. They gave a short and succulent biography of them all. They headed the list "The Lady Penelope Handicap." They used some slang about "weight for age."

"Great heavens!" said Titania, "all town is ringing with it. If this is the result of looking on marriage as one's private business, give me publicity!"

There would have been less of it if a prince had married a publican's daughter in St. Paul's, and had presented the dean with a set of pewter pots.

"And if she does what she says!"

The only men who did not talk much about Penelope were naturally those who aspired to win her. Every one neglected politics and sport to discuss her. She became politics and sport. Huge sums of money were at stake as to whether she would keep her word; as to the length of time she would keep the secret, and as to who the man was to be. There were public and private books made on the series of events. And there was a Penelope party and an opposition. Many young people who

were revolutionary in their sentiments said she was right. There was a Penelope Cave in the House of Commons. Some of those who fought year in and year out for the Deceased Wife's Sister backed her up. It was whispered that the prince was a Penelopian; two princesses threatened with objectionable persons of the royal blood were heard to observe that there was something in what she said. Penelope was within measurable distance of becoming a national, or even an international, question. Mrs. X. wrote an article in the *Fortnightly* on "Secret Marriage in History." Mr. Z. sat down and wrote a novel, bristling with "wit and epigram," in ten days, which ran into the third edition of two hundred and fifty copies in thirty. It was said that questions were to be asked in the House. A play on the subject was forbidden by the lord chamberlain. The wittiest article on the subject was written by a Mr. Shaw. He argued that no really beautiful woman had any right to be married at all. He said plaintively that it wasn't fair, and convinced the ugly in two syllogisms.

And, as the result of this, Penelope went away into the country, though it was May, with Ethel Mytton and Mrs. Cadwallader, who was called Chloe, and stood by Pen remorselessly in every difficulty. For Pen had helped her out of an awful

mess, the history of which would make a whole story of itself. As a result of it, Cadwallader was in the Rocky Mountains shooting, and a certain young soldier was taking too much liquor and too little quinine in Nigeria, and Chloe got her diamonds back from Messrs. Attenborough, and was eternally grateful to Penelope in consequence.

"And I shall send for them one by one," said Penelope. "They can come down by the ten o'clock train from Paddington, and go back by the five o'clock one from here. And after lunch I shall explain my ideas to them."

"And I'll be with you," said Chloe, who was as dark-locked as a raven's wing.

"Oh, I don't mind," said Penelope; "of course you will. I'm too young, am I not, to be left alone, Chloe? Is it true, Chloe, that the older a woman gets the bigger fool she is?"

Chloe said it was true.

"I'll ask Titania to let Bob come over," said Penelope. "He's the wisest person I know."

Bob was Titania's grandson, and was certainly young enough to be wise, as he was only fourteen. He had been sent to three of the great public schools, and had been taken away because of his fighting capabilities. He never knew when he had enough, and it is quite impossible to keep a boy

at any school if he breaks out of bounds to fight some young butcher or baker in a back alley at least once a week. Now he had a tutor who had been an amateur boxer of great merit. It began to take the tutor all his time to handle his pupil. But if Bob was knocked endways about three times a week, it sobered him and made him do his work. He did not yet know whether he wanted to be a prize-fighter or the commander-in-chief. But he loved Penelope.

"I'll send for Bob," said Penelope.

And Bob came with Mr. Guthrie, his tutor, and Titania was glad to get rid of him for a time.

"Oh, Pen," said Bob, "how jolly kind of you to ask me. I'm sick of grandmother; she worries me to death. Always says, 'Robert, you mustn't.' I say, have you read Kip's 'Cat that Walked by Himself'? Mr. Guthrie says it's splendid, and I say it's rot. But old Guth likes Virgil and Horace. Isn't that strange, for he can box like anything. Baker, the groom, says he can. And Baker's awful good with the mitts. But I say, Pen, what's all this about you in the papers? Grandmother wails when she sees one now. I ain't sure I like having you so much in the papers, Pen."

"I don't like it, either," said Penelope, "but I can't help it."

"Is it true that you're going to be married and never tell any one?" demanded Bob from the bottom of a huge rocking-chair, as they sat on the lawn. They were in one of Pen's habitable houses, and the lawn ran down to the Thames.

"I won't if I don't want to," said Penelope. "But you're a boy, Bob, and don't understand these things."

Bob snorted and smiled, not unsubtly.

"Oh, Pen, don't be like grandmother. I understand pretty nearly everything now. Granny's always saying that, and it's jolly rot. You can't be like me, turned out of three schools, and not know something. Are you going to get married soon?"

Pen shook her head.

"She's very savage at your knowing that Jew cad, Gordon, but grandfather isn't. He says that Gordon may be a Jew, of course, but he's all right. I asked him if I could get put on a board as a director, and he was so mad with me. I think Gordon's asked him to be a director, and he'd like to only he daren't. He's got none too much money, you know, Pen. But about all these chaps, Pen?"

He went through the horde seriatim, and pronounced upon them all with ineffable wisdom.

"Goby's an ass, but a good ass, Pen," he said, as he kicked with his legs. "He gave me a thick-un

a year ago when I was in difficulties. But he hasn't the brains to make a good corporal. Baker says that. Baker was a sergeant in the Dublin Fusiliers. I like Plant, though, Pen. Baker says he rides in a rummy fashion, more like a circus man than anything else, but he can stick to a horse. And there's your Frenchman. I say, how does he come to be called Rivaulx? Was he called after Rivaulx in Yorkshire, or was it called after him? Ask him if he shoots larks in his native country. All Frenchmen do, old Guth says. He says he read a book the other day in which a French priest says he never sees a lark without wanting to shoot it. What a miserable rotter, wasn't he? But Rivaulx isn't so bad, though. He's a gentleman, at any rate, though he is French. I say, why do foreigners never look like gentlemen? Dashed if I know. I've often wondered, because grandfather likes them, through his having been an ambassador. Sometimes a German does, though. And Bramber's all right, Pen. I don't think I'd mind your marrying him."

"I won't marry any one who isn't a useful citizen," said Pen.

"He's all right," urged Bob. "He's as strong as a bull. Baker says he'd peel better than most prize-fighters. What is a useful citizen? I say, if you get married, you'll tell me who it is?"

"No," said Penelope.

"I call that mean," said Bob. "I'd not tell any one, and I'd help like fun."

"I'm sure you would, Bob. But I may never get married."

"Rot," said Bob, "a girl like you not get married! Oh, I say!"

And he continued to say for some hours, and proved himself most entertaining company, quoting Baker, who had been a sergeant in the Dublin Fusiliers, and had been very severely knocked about by Jem Mace, and appealing to Mr. Guthrie, who came over with him to get him to look at a book in the mornings, to back him up. He was really very modest and gentlemanly, at the same time that he was exceedingly bumptious and arrogant, after the best manner of the extremely healthy English boy.

And at twelve o'clock he came running to Penelope and Chloe by the river-bank in wild excitement.

"I say, Pen, I say, Pen, there's old Goby coming, and with that miserable rotter who makes poetry. What's brought 'em here?"

"I asked them to lunch," said Pen.

"Eh, what?" cried Bob. "Goby and that rotter, Austin de Vere! I say, Mr. Guthrie —"

He ran off to Guthrie, bawling:

"I say, Mr. Guthrie, here's that poet chap, Austin

de Vere, come. Didn't you say he mostly wrote rot?"

And Goby and De Vere came across the lawn together, like a mastiff and a Maltese in company. They made each other as nervous as cats, and couldn't for their lives understand why they were asked together.

"The clumsy brute," said De Vere.

"The verse-making monkey," said Goby.

But tailors could have admired them both. They were perfect. And lunch was a most painful function, only endurable to Penelope because she was on the track of her duty, and to Chloe because she laughed internally, and to Mr. Guthrie (who was really a clever man) because he liked to study men and manners, and to Bob because he talked all the time, owing to the silence of the others.

"I say, Captain Goby, I've got a splendid bull-pup. Baker got him for me, cheap, for a quid, — a sovereign, I mean. You remember Baker. He was a sergeant, — oh, I told you that just now. Do you like bulldogs, Mr. de Vere?"

De Vere was politely sulky.

"Bulldogs, oh, ah, well, I do not know that I do."

He looked at Goby, who was also sulky and feeling very much out of it. But the subject of bull-

dogs appealed to him, because he saw it didn't amuse his rival.

"I'll give you a real good pup, Bob," he said, good-naturedly; "one that no one could get for a sovereign."

"A real pedigree pup?"

"With a pedigree as long as your own," said Goby.

Bob sighed, and laid his hand on Goby's.

"I say, Pen, isn't Captain Goby a real good 'un?" he asked. "Baker says —"

But what Baker said does not come into this history, as the lunch finished, and they all went into the garden. Goby spoke to Bob as they went out.

"I say, Bob, get hold of that ass De Vere, and talk to him as hard as the very deuce, will you?"

"You meant that about the pup?" said Bob.

"Of course, Bob."

"I'll talk his beastly head off," said Bob.

And this was why Penelope spoke confidentially to Captain Goby before she did so to the poet. She was exceedingly pale and very dignified, but she lost no time in getting to the point.

"Captain Goby," she said, "you have asked me to marry you at least three times."

Goby sighed.

"Is it only three?" he demanded, and he added, firmly, "it will be more yet."

"And I said 'no' because I had no idea of marrying any one."

"That was rot," said Goby. "For, if you married no one else, you would marry me."

"Certainly not as you are," retorted Penelope. "I want you and all men (that I know) to reform."

Goby was not astonished at anything Penelope said.

"I reformed long ago," he said. "As soon as I saw you, I said I'd reform and I did. It was a great deal of trouble, but I did it. Oh, you've no idea how I suffered. But I said, 'Plantagenet, my boy, if you are to be worthy, you must buck up!'"

This was encouraging.

"I'm glad I've had so much influence," said Pen, who didn't quite know what his reforms had been. "But there are other things. This is merely negative. What are you doing to be useful to the state? Are you loafing about on your money? Do you do any work? Are you educating yourself?"

Goby gasped.

"I say, come, Lady Penelope, I've done all that! Education! why, I had a horrid time at school and at a crammer's —"

"Do you read?" asked Pen, severely.

"Why, of course," said Goby.

"What?"

Goby rubbed his cropped hair with two fingers.

"Papers?"

"Anything?" said Pen.

"Well, I read the *Sportsman* and the *Pink Un* (at least, I did before I reformed) and the *Referee*," said Goby.

"Books?"

"Not many," said Goby. "But I will. What do you recommend?"

"I think Tennyson and Shelley would do you good," said Pen, "but you had better ask Mr. de Vere. And do you do anything useful?"

"De Vere! Oh, Lord!" cried Goby. "Anything useful? Why, I was in the army —"

"And now you do nothing. Well," said Penelope, "I think you had better begin at once. Any man I know has to do something useful. You must go to the War Office and ask to be made something again. I think a colonelcy of a militia regiment would suit you. And I am going to ask Mr. de Vere to take an interest in your reading."

"The devil!" said Goby. "I say, my dear Lady Penelope, I can't stand him. Why, you may have seen we are barely civil to each other."

"I shall speak to him firmly," said Penelope, "and it's for his good, too. He leads an unhealthy indoor life. I want you to change all that. You row a great deal still, don't you?"

"Since I reformed I began again," said Goby. He felt the muscles of his right arm with complacency.

"Take him out and make him row, then," said Pen, "and while he rows you can read poetry to him, and so on. It will be good for both of you."

"But —" said Goby.

"Yes?"

"If I do this, will you marry me?"

Penelope shook her head.

"If you do it, I'll think whether I'll marry you."

"Oh," said the soldier, "and if I just can't hit it off with that poet?"

"Then I won't think about it," replied Pen. "I'll never, never consider the possibility of marrying any one who isn't leading a useful life, and educating himself, and living on less than a thousand a year. Can you do that, too?"

"Dashed if I see how it can be done," said Plantagenet Goby. "But I'll try, oh, yes, I'll try."

"Now you talk to Chloe," said Penelope, and she went away to the rescue of the poet. For Bob had got him in a corner.

CAPTAIN PLANTAGENET GOBY, V. C., LATE OF THE GUARDS
Who was ordered to read poetry

"I say, Mr. de Vere, wasn't that ripping of old Goby to say he'd give me a real pedigree bull-pup? He knows a bull-pup from a window-shutter, as Baker says. You don't like them? No, but you would if you had one. I feed mine myself, and I wear thick gloves, so's not to get hydrophobia when he bites. He's a most interesting dog, and not so good-tempered as most bulldogs. When he sees a cat, oh, my, it's fun! Look here, when Goby gives me the new pup with the pedigree, you can have mine, if you like, cheap. I know you have a place in the country, and you *must* want a bulldog. Will you buy him?"

"Good heavens, no!" said the poet.

"Humph!" cried Bob, who of course had quite forgotten that he was doing all this for Goby, and was just enjoying himself. "Why, what do you do in the country without a dog? Do you ride?"

"No," said De Vere.

"Well, of all — I say, Mr. de Vere, what do you do? Do you walk about and make poetry, and do you like making it? Old Guth, I mean Mr. Guthrie, he's my tutor, and he's over there talking to Mrs. Cadwallader, he reads a lot, and some of yours, too."

"Oh, does he!" said De Vere, who began to take some interest. "Does he?"

"Oh, a lot of yours, he says; most of it, I think."

"And does he like it?"

Bob put his head on one side.

"Well, he says it's not bad, some of it."

De Vere flinched at this faint praise.

"Indeed! And what does he like best?" he asked.

"Oh, the beastliest rot," returned Bob, "Browning and Shelley, and I say, do you see that bulge in his pocket? That's Catullus. He reads him all day. But here comes Pen. I say, won't you have my bull-pup? I'll let you have him for half a sovereign; I got him for a sovereign, at least, Baker did. *I* think your poetry's very fine, sir; Mr. Guthrie lent me some."

But Penelope came across the lawn, and De Vere forgot Bob and the bull-pup, and fell down and worshipped. And the goddess took hold of him, and stripped a lot of his poetry away, and set a few facts before him and made him gasp.

"I heard a very strange rumour, Lady Penelope," he said, when he was once more standing upright before Aphrodite. "I heard — oh, but it was absurd! I can't believe it."

"Then it is probably true," said the goddess, breathlessly, "for I mean to have my own way and to initiate a reform in marriages, Mr. de Vere.

I have been reading the accounts of some fashionable weddings lately, and they made me ill. What you have heard is quite true."

The poet shook his head.

"I have had the honour to beg you to believe a thousand times that I am devoted to you —"

"Three times, I think," said Pen, who was good at arithmetic.

"Is it only thrice? But do I understand that, if I were to have the inexpressible delight of winning your love, Lady Penelope, that the marriage would be a secret one, that no one would know of it?"

"I mean that," said Penelope, enthusiastically. "It is a new departure, an assertion of a just individualism, although I am a socialist. I abhor ceremonies, and will not be interfered with. I have stated with the utmost clarity to all my relations that I shall not consult them or let them know until I choose, and I shall only get married (if I ever do) on these terms."

"I agree to them," said the poet. "Lady Penelope, will you do me the inexpressible honour to be my wife?"

"Oh, dear, no," said Pen. "Why, certainly not, Mr. de Vere. I don't love any one yet, and perhaps I never shall. But what I say is this: I'll think as

to whether I shall marry you if you do as I wish about this matter and about others."

"My blessed lady," said the poet, "is there anything I would not dare or do?"

"I've told Captain Goby exactly the same thing," said Penelope, thereby putting her pretty foot upon the sudden flowers of De Vere's imagination, "and what I want of you is to be more an out-of-door man. You live too much in rooms, hothouses, Mr. de Vere, and in your own garden."

"I was in a garden, I a poet, with one who was (oh, and is) an angel," said De Vere, "but now I dwell in arid deserts, shall I say the Desert of Gobi? What have I to do with him? Shall he dare to pretend to you, dear lady?"

"He's a very good chap," said Pen, quite shortly, "and I think it would do you good to associate with him more. I've told him so, and he agrees. I want you to make him read a little, and exercise his imagination. And he can take you out rowing and shooting perhaps, and I think a little hunting wouldn't do you harm. You might ask him to stay with you, and he'll ask you. And I want you to go out in motor-cars."

"Good heavens!" said De Vere.

"I know it will be hard," said Pen, consolingly. "But you know what I want. It's not enough to

be rich and write poetry, Mr. de Vere. I think you might read statistics; statistics are a tonic, and I want you to be a useful citizen, too. There are things to be done. Just look at my cousin Bob. Now he'll be a splendid man."

"He wanted to sell me a bull-pup," murmured the poet.

"He's a good boy," said Pen, affectionately, "and his instincts are to be trusted. I think a bulldog would do you good perhaps. And I shall expect to hear you have asked Captain Goby to stay with you. And don't forget the statistics."

"I'll do it," said the unhappy poet, "for while the One Hope I have exists, and until 'vain desire at last and vain regret go hand in hand to death,' I am your slave."

And, as he went away, he called Bob to him.

"I'll give you half a sovereign for that bulldog," he said, bitterly.

"Oh, I say. But Baker says he's worth two sovereigns," cried Bob.

"I'll give you two," said the poet.

And Bob danced on the lawn.

CHAPTER IV.

If Penelope had had any sense of humour, she would have deprived the round world of much to laugh at in sad times, when laughter was wanted. But thanks be to whatever gods there are, some folks have no humour, and some have a little, and a few much, and thus the world gets on in spite of the spirit of gravity, which, as may be remembered by students of philosophy, Nietzsche branded as the enemy. Pen went ahead, bent on cutting her own swath in the hay-field, and she cut a big one. Goby and the poet must stand as exemplars of her clear and childlike method. It was Pen's Short Way with Her Lovers. She got Rivaulx, who was Nationalist and Anti-Semite to his manicured finger-tips, and had been mixed up in the Dreyfus case, and set him cheek by jowl with Gordon, *alias* Isaac Levi.

She made them dine together in public, and the poor marquis, being head over heels in love with

the earnest creature who was so beautiful, submitted like a lamb.

"Very well, I will," said Rivaulx. There were almighty shrieks in the Paris press. The *Journal* had an article that was wonderful. The affair woke up anti-Semitism again. Rivaulx had been bought by Jewry; France was once more betrayed; the bottom of the world was falling out.

Pen, with no sense of humour, had a native capacity for discovering every one's real weakness. As the Frenchman would rather have died than dine as he did, so Gordon would almost prefer to die suddenly than to run the risk of it. He had wonderful brains, and was a power in finance: he could risk a million when he hadn't it or when he had it as coolly as most men can risk a penny on the chance of a slot-machine working. But physically he was timid. Rivaulx went ballooning. He intended to rival Santos-Dumont.

"You must go with him, Mr. Gordon," said Penelope. Gordon nearly fainted, but Pen was firm, as firm as a rock. Gordon offered to subscribe to all the hospitals in London if she would let him off. He offered to build a small one and endow it; he even suggested that he would build a church. But the poor man had to go. It was now thoroughly understood that any man who refused to

do exactly what she told him was struck off the list. The comic papers were almost comic about it. On the day that Gordon went up with Rivaulx in an entirely non-dirigible balloon, the Crystal Palace grounds were crowded with all the Frenchmen and all the Jews in London. The balloon came down in a turnip-field fifteen miles from anywhere, and Gordon got back to London and went to bed. He was consoled by a telegram from Penelope, who congratulated him on overcoming his natural cowardice, and suggested he should do it again.

"I'll give her up first," said Gordon, knowing all the time that he could no more do it than give up finance. He went out and robbed a lot of his friends as a compensation for disturbance, and found himself a hero. In about forty-eight hours the sensation of being looked on as a man of exceptional grit so pleased him that he adored Penelope more than ever. He was as proud of having been in a balloon as Rivaulx was of having dined *tête-à-tête* with him in the open.

She sent for Rufus Q. Plant, and she introduced him to Lord Bramber. Plant was a big American with the common delusion among Americans that he had an entirely English accent. But he hated aristocrats. Bramber had an Oxford accent (Balliol variety), and disliked Americans more than

getting up in the morning. He was a fine-looking young fellow with a good skull, who did nothing with it. He had the tendencies of a citizen of Sybaris, and got up at noon. Plant rose at dawn. Bramber loved horses and hated motor-cars. Plant had a manufactory of motors. Pen sent them away together on a little tour, and hinted delicately to Plant that his English accent would be improved by a little Oxford polish.

"And as for you, Lord Bramber, when you come back, I hope you will be more ready to acknowledge that you don't know everything. Mr. Plant will do you good, and will teach you to drive a motor!"

She had never been so beautiful. She showed at her best when her interest in humanity made her courageous and brutal. The colour in her cheeks was splendid; her eyes were as earnest as the sea. If Bramber choked, he submitted, though he blasphemed awfully when he got alone.

"Go at once," said Penelope.

She paired off Carteret Williams with Jimmy Carew, A. R. A. Williams knew as much about art as a hog does of harmony. Jimmy thought the war correspondent a howling Philistine, as indeed he was, and believed anything that could not be painted was a mere by-product of the universe.

"You'll do each other good," said Pen, clasping

her beautiful hands together with enthusiasm. Jimmy wanted to draw her at once. Williams wished for an immediate invasion, so that he could save her life and write a flamboyant article about it.

"Show him pictures, Mr. Carew, beginning with Turner and Whistler."

"Make him understand that art isn't everything, Mr. Williams."

She sent them away together, and was wonderfully pleased with herself.

"They are all fine men," she said, thoughtfully, "but it is curious that every man I know thinks every other man more or less of a fool or an idiot, or a cad. They are dreadfully one-sided. When they come back they will be much improved. This is my work in the world, and I don't care a bit what people say."

People said lots, though after a bit the fun died down, except among her own people. And even they laughed at last. At least, every one did but Titania, and she had no more sense of humour than Penelope herself. Indeed, she had less, for Penelope could understand a joke when it was explained to her carefully, and Titania couldn't. And in after years Pen came to see the humourous side of things. She even appreciated a joke against herself, which is the crucial test of humour. But Titania died

maintaining that life was a serious business, and should be taken like medicine.

"I never heard of more insane proceedings," said Titania, "never! The notion of sending that poor Jew up in a balloon with that mad Frenchman! Balloons at the best are blasphemous. And to make Captain Goby read with poor little De Vere! I'm sure there will be murder done before she's married. And now it's an understood thing that she will marry one of them. And Brading laughs! If he *is* only her half-brother, I consider him responsible. And Augustin smiles and smokes and smokes and smiles. And Chloe Cadwallader, whom I never approved of and never shall, backs her up, of course. One of these days I shall tell Chloe Cadwallader what I think of her!"

"I say, granny, what do you think of her?" asked Bob.

"Never mind," said Titania; "there are things that you know nothing of, Robert."

"Oh, are there?" said Bob. "I say, granny, I ain't sure of that. I've been expelled from three schools, and Baker says —"

"Oh, bother Baker," cried his exasperated grandmother. "I think Mr. Guthrie might keep you away from Baker."

"He can't," said Bob, cheerfully. "Old Guth

and I have made a treaty. I do what he tells me between ten and twelve, and what I like afterward. If we are reading Latin, and the clock strikes twelve, I say, 'Mr. Guthrie, don't you think Latin's rot?' and he says, 'Oh, is it twelve? I thought it was only eleven!' I get on with Guth, I tell you."

And he was very thick with Goby, who had given him the pedigree bull-pup. Mr. de Vere now owned the interesting one which had to be fed with gloves on, and loathed it with an exceeding hatred only exceeded by his hatred for Goby.

"I say, Pen, you go it," said Bob. "There's heaps of fun in this. They all tip me now like winking."

But Pen did not see the fun. It was a serious business. She looked after her lovers with the greatest care. They brought her reports; they complained of each other. She smoothed over difficulties, and explained what they were to do.

"How the devil am I to live on a thousand a year!" said Goby. But he tried it and found it quite exciting. It exercised his self-control wonderfully. He went into the War Office once a week and demanded some kind of job, and was put off with all kinds of regulations. He sent a telegram to Penelope the first week, saying that according to his accounts he had spent no more than £20.

She wired congratulations, and received another wire:

"Have made a mistake. Forgot to include a few bills. Will be more careful in future.

"GOBY."

Plant said:

"What, a thousand a year! That's easy. I can live on thirty shillings a week. My dear Lady Penelope, I've done it on half a dollar a day. I'll show you."

He took one room in Bloomsbury, and sent in his bills and accounts to her weekly. She suggested he should find out if his great success in the United States had ruined any one in particular, and if so that he should compensate them. This cost him a hundred thousand dollars. Almost every other day she got a telegram something like this:

"Have found another person I ruined. Am cabling five thousand dollars to widow and orphans. Man is dead."

Or, —

"Another find. Man said to be a lunatic, but perfectly sane except on point of Trusts. Have cabled for his transfer to more comfortable asylum."

Or, —

"Widow refuses money with insults. Have settled it on daughter, and have given son job."

Or, —

"Man in question has given amount cabled to Republicans of New York. Has recovered and has started a Trust himself."

This was very satisfactory. Penelope saw she was doing good. In the middle of her joy, she received a wire from Goby.

"May I stop poetry with De Vere? Doctor says I am overdoing it. GOBY."

She also received one at the same time from De Vere:

"If I could have a week to myself to write satire, should be eternally grateful. Doctor says rowing may be carried to excess. The bulldog is well.

"DE VERE."

The Marquis de Rivaulx, after a fortnight with Gordon, asked to be allowed to go over to Paris to see his mother. But he acknowledged that Gordon was not a bad chap, though he was as white as a sheet in the balloon.

"And he told me, my dear lady, what to buy. He knows very well what to buy and what to sell. He is immensely clevair, oh, yes. And may I go and see *maman?*"

She let him go, but not before he promised to take no part in any further anti-Semitic proceedings. She told Gordon not to brag so much of having been in a balloon.

"You know you were afraid," she said. "The marquis said you were."

"Of course I was," said Gordon, "but I went, didn't I?"

That was unanswerable.

She had an "at home" once a week. It was understood that no one but her own relatives and members of the horde were to call on that day. She then issued any directions that she thought of during the week. Bradstock was now openly and recklessly on her side.

"I believe you're doing good, real good," said Augustin. "I'm proud of you. Don't mind my laughing, Pen. Oh, but you are wonderful."

He gave her advice.

"Kick young Bramber into public life," he said. "He's got brains."

"Lord Bramber," said Pen, "you are to go into Parliament at once. Speak to Lord Bradstock

about it, and I'll talk to Mrs. Mytton on your behalf. I expect you to be an Under-Secretary of State at once."

"Damn! this is worse than Plant," said the obedient Bramber. Nevertheless, he owned that Plant was a man, and a real good sort.

"I go to see him, Lady Penelope, in his room in Bloomsbury. He's living on about half a crown a day. I — oh — yes, I'm coming down to the thousand by degrees. And of course if you want me to go into the House, I'll go."

Carteret Williams was there, and was put through his paces by Pen about art. He had learnt something about it by rote.

"The Academy is composed of painters," he said, mechanically, "but there are few artists in it. I quite agree with Carew, who had his pictures chucked before they made him an associate through fear. Turner is a very great artist. He shows how near the sublime can get to the ridiculous. Whistler is also great. He shows how near the ridiculous can go to the sublime. Art is a combination of the material and the spiritual. So Carew says. He showed me a lot of Blake, and he says that the beauty of Blake is that you can't understand him by any ordinary means, such as the intellect. I'm not up to Blake yet. The old masters are very fine.

I admit it. Velasquez is dry, but wonderful. Rembrandt appeals to me because he is very dark; I think he would be better if he were darker. We go to the National Gallery every day, and then I take him to the Press Club, where he hears about real life."

When Carew came, he owned that Williams wasn't a bad sort.

"And he's doing his level best to understand," said Carew, with enthusiasm. "He stands before a picture of mine every day for an hour while I explain it. He sees something in it at last. And he's reading about art, and is beginning to see why a photograph isn't the last word of things. He's led a wonderful life, Lady Penelope, and when he gets on what he's seen and done, I feel almost ashamed to live as I do."

"That's right," said Pen; "every artist should. And every man who is not an artist should be sorry that he is not. We are far from perfect yet."

How beautiful she looked, thought Carew.

"She lives in the world of the ideal, and so do I."

"I am very much pleased with everything," said Pen at large to the assembly, and De Vere, who was having a holiday for his satire, was pleased

too. And Goby was delighted at being let off poetry for awhile.

"Not but what there's something in it, I admit," said Goby, critically. "Robert Lindsay Gordon is a fair snorter at it. I can't say I'm up to Shelley yet. De Vere read me the Epi-something-or-other."

"'Epipsychidion,'" said Pen.

"That's it, a regular water-jump of a word," said Goby, "and he took it in his stride, while I boggled on the bank. However, I'm coming up hand over hand with him. I'm reading Keats with him. He's all right when you get to know him, Lady Penelope, and rowing's doing him no end of good. He's a well-made little chap, and getting some good muscle. If I'm not dead by the time I can take the Epi-what's-his-name, I'll make a man of him."

Rivaulx, who had come in with Gordon on his return from seeing his mother in Paris, was very proud of himself.

"A year ago I should not have had the courage to show myself with a Jew," said Rivaulx, triumphantly. "Lady, dear lady, I thought I should have died when I asked him to dinner. But now I like him. He is wonderful. When he says 'buy,' I buy, and heigh, presto! the shares go up like

my balloon. And when he says 'sell,' I sell, and they go down like a barometer when you go up. Oh, yes, and all your aristocracy admire him. I saw seven great lords with him the other day, and they said: 'What company am I to be a director of, Gordon?' and he said he'd ask his clerk. But I have refused to be a director. I should not like *maman* to know I know him. She is very dreadful against Jews, owing to the *affaire* in France."

And that was the celebrated afternoon that Penelope, who found that she was doing good in every way to all mankind by obliterating all class and professional jealousies, raised passion and curiosity to its highest point by saying, with the sweetest blush:

"Very well, then, I promise to marry one of you!"

CHAPTER V.

PENELOPE was the swan, and all her relations were the ducks. The noise they made was simply unendurable. For, besides Titania, she had cousins and other aunts, or people who were in the position of aunts, and she had friends who had been friends of her mother, and they came down on her like the Assyrian. They objected to publicity, especially for other people, and for a young woman to become a public character was something worse than immorality. Nothing but Penelope's entire singleness of character and her humourous want of humour enabled her to meet and overcome them. And even she felt at times that flight was the only thing left. She sent to her solicitor for a list of all the houses and mansions and castles that she owned, and she took her motor-car and her pet chauffeur, and, having borrowed Bob from his grandmother, she set off on a tour. She disappeared for a week at a time. Then she disappeared for two weeks. She was even lost for a month.

"She ought to be in an asylum," said Titania, "and I have to let Bob go with her. He is some kind of a safeguard. How do I know she isn't married already? Bob, dear Bob, has ceased to confide in me. When I interrogate him, he puts me off. I get nothing out of him. The only thing that I can congratulate myself on is that now, instead of 'Baker says,' it is 'Pen says.' And I doubt, I own I doubt, and I cannot help it, whether Bob is not being done serious harm to, considering that he will one day be a duke. A duke should be brought up properly. Goring was brought up badly, I deeply regret to say. He laughs at Penelope's behaviour, and says girls will be girls. I say they will be women, and he says, 'Thank the Lord,' and I don't know what he means. But, as I say, this wretched girl may be married by now. It is already months since she said, in my hearing, to a whole crowd of men, 'I promise to marry one of you!' Was there ever an aunt in a more unfortunate position? I feel as if I should become a lunatic. Augustin, do you hear me, I am rapidly becoming insane."

"Oh, ah," said Augustin, who always knew more about Pen's actions than any one else. She wrote to him from a hundred places.

"Keep your eye upon Mr. Gordon," she said. "And what are people saying about Lord Bramber's speech? I shall be up in town in time to see Mr. Carew's new picture. I got a letter from Mr. de Vere, saying that Captain Goby was learning Wordsworth's ode on the 'Intimations of Immortality in Childhood' by heart. Mr. de Vere says he is doing what I told him, and is keeping his eye on Mr. Roosevelt. I told him to model himself on the President of the United States. He says he rows and has bought a Sandow exerciser, and he says it does not make him so tired now. Mr. Williams told me when I was last in town that he was thinking of writing a guide to Dulwich Galery if war didn't break out. I am afraid he hopes it will. Mr. Plant's last weekly accounts were only 10*s.* 6*d.* I advised him to see a doctor if he thought it was doing him harm. The marquis has written a very good article in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* against anti-Semitism. I am greatly pleased with this. I hope Mr. Carew's picture is intelligible. I told him it was no absolute sign of genius to be entirely incomprehensible. He took it very well. I think Mr. Williams will have a good effect on him. I have visited ten mansions, seven castles (two with moats; mother used to love moats, because there are none in America), and several other

houses of mine. Most need repairs. I shall be home next week. Tell aunt that Bob is very well and brown, and is learning to drive my car at full speed down a narrow road with sharp turns in it. Smith says he will be the best driver in England when he is grown up, if he goes on and doesn't have his nerve broken up early by an accident. But I think his nerve is good, though I can't always tell, as I shut my eyes when we go very fast. Good-bye now, dear Guardy.

"Your loving

"PENELOPE.

"P. S. I am *sure* I am doing good!"

Bob was very sure of it, too.

"I say, Pen, old Guth will be lonely, won't he? But he's all right if he has a bally Catullus in his pocket, and he draws his screw just the same. Granny is very decent to him, take it all around. And I like him because he likes dogs. I must wire to Baker to hear how 'Captain' is getting on. I called him Captain because old Goby gave him to me. I say, Pen, don't you think Smith is a ripping good driver? He says that he'll be my chauffeur when I'm a duke, if you don't want him. He says him and me'll win every bally race. I'd like to do

that. I begin to think horse-racing is rot. You see three or four people can't ride a race-horse, and the responsibility of driving you fast when the road's crooked is the fun. Every time I miss a cart, Pen, I feel as happy as if I'd hit Rhodes for four every time he sent a ball down to me. That would be fun. Baker says — no, I mean Smith says that all other sports are rot of the worst kind. He says if he's ever rich, he'll go through the city every day as fast as he can. He hates the police, and some of them hate him. He rode over a sergeant in the Kingston Road once, but he didn't hurt him much. When shall we leave this castle and go to another one? I hope the next is a long way off. Smith says he wants a good road to show what she'll do when she's out to the last notch. And it must be down-hill."

And in town, while Pen was going about the country, people's tongues ran as fast as any motor-car.

"It is nonsense," said one; "she's married already."

"I know she's not. I paid a shilling and looked it up at Somerset House."

"That's nothing," said a barrister. "They could have been married under wrong names."

"That wouldn't be legal."

"Yes, it would. It's only illegal if a false name is used and one of the parties doesn't know. Then the one who is deceived can get a declaration of nullity," said the barrister.

"Oh, well, but who is it?"

"It's no one. I don't believe she'll marry at all."

"She's a crank."

"It's madness. I hear the Duchess of Goring has taken to her bed."

"Well, Goring hasn't. I saw him at the Frivolity."

"Who is it now?"

"I don't know her name. But where's Lady Penelope?"

No one knew but Bradstock, and even Augustin was behind by a post or two. None of the "horde" knew, and they began to get suspicious of each other. Goby watched De Vere, and De Vere kept his eye on Goby. It was obvious from the newspapers that Bramber was in the House. Gordon was seen at his Club. And then Carteret Williams was missing. Carew hunted for him in vain at the Press Club and at the office of the *Morning Hour*. There was no war yet, though there were rumours of it in the Balkans as usual.

It got about that she had married Williams,

though he had only run away from Carew for a week.

"The very worst of the lot," wailed Titania. "I knew it would be Williams. He's hardly a gentleman, though he comes of a good family. Being a war correspondent makes a man brutal. I knew, I knew, I knew it was Williams, and now I shall never speak to her; and he will beat her in time, I know it, and there will be a horrible scandal; and what, oh, what can she have done with Bob? Augustin, go at once and find where Bob is. I knew it would be Williams! Didn't I always say it would be Williams? I could have forgiven her any one else."

Gordon came to ask Bradstock if it was true. And Bradstock had a sense of humour, if Pen had none.

"My dear sir," he said, "how can I tell? She liked him very much, took a great interest in him. She told me he was writing a guide to the art of Dulwich Gallery. Do you think that a bad sign?"

Gordon groaned.

"It looks bad, Lord Bradstock. But I don't believe she takes much interest in him. She takes an interest in me, my lord! Why, I went up in a balloon all on her account. I went with that madman, the French marquis, and as sure as my name's

Le— I mean Gordon, there's not another woman in the world I'd have done it for. Don't you think that going up in a balloon, when you'd rather die than do it, ought to touch a woman's heart? I give you my word that she as good as said, 'Go up in a balloon and I'll —' well, or words to that effect. I tell you what, Lord Bradstock, I know you ain't a rich man, not a very rich one, that is, but, if you'll be on my side, I'll put you on to a good thing, the best thing in the market. It's going up like — oh, like a beastly balloon, sir, — my lord, I mean. I'm making it go up, and I'll tell you when to sell. Oh, Lord, I'm very unhappy, my lord. I love the ground she walks on. I'd like to buy it at the price of a city frontage. Come in with me, my lord, and you shall have a tip that half a dozen dukes are dying for. There's a room full of bally dukes waiting to see me now, and I gave them the slip. Will you come in with me? Do, do!"

He was a lamentable object, and there was a spot upon his hat which did not shine. He worked at it eagerly with his sleeve, and stood waiting for a reply.

"I don't mind telling you," said Bradstock, "that my income is only five thousand a year."

"Poor beggar!" murmured Gordon.

"But I only spend four. And if I had more what could I do with it?"

"Give it me," said Gordon, eagerly, "and I'll make more of it for you. Man alive, — my lord, I mean — I can make it millions."

There was a faint suspicion of the "millionth" in the word.

"I can make it millionth," said Gordon. "I've put a pound or two into that Frenchman's pocket, I can tell you, though he did take me up in a balloon, and I'll put fifty for one into yourth, so help me."

"I don't want it."

"Well, you can give it away," shrieked Gordon. "They'll make you a duke if you only give away enough. If there wathn't a faint thuspithion of Jewish blood in me, I'd be a baron now at leaththth. Give it away to hospithalths, build a lunatic asylum, finanth your party. And if that don't thucktheed, go into beer or biscuits, and you'll be made anything you like."

"If they would make me thirty, I'd do it," said Bradstock.

"Thirty dukes?" asked Gordon, in bewilderment.

"Thirty years old," said Bradstock.

LEOPOLD NORFOLK GORDON
Some said his real name was Isaac Levi

Gordon advanced on him and took him by a button.

"My lord," he said, solemnly, "money ith youth and strength and everything except Lady Penelope. If you had a million, you'd feel twenty-five. When I had a measly hundred thousand, I was thin and always going to doctors. When I got two, I got fatter and gave 'em up. Now I'm worth two millionth."

But Bradstock said, brutally: "No, Mr. Gordon, I don't want money, and I don't want you to marry Lady Penelope. If I had a million, I'd rather lose it than see her do so."

"Did you tell her that?" asked Gordon.

"I did."

"I'm damned glad," said Gordon. "If you want a cat to go one way, pull its tail the other."

"Tut, tut," said Bradstock, and Gordon went away sorrowfully, for he had great riches, and saw no good in them without Pen.

Bradstock had to interview all the lovers one after one. They came to implore his vote and interest. He saw Rivaulx, whose great desire was to look like an Englishman and act like one. Rivaulx adopted a stony calm, which sat upon him like a title on a Jew, but did not stick so tight. He ended a talk which began most conventionally

in a wild and impassioned waltz around Bradstock's room, with despair for a partner. He tore at his hair, but, having had it clipped till it was like a shaved blacking-brush, he could not get hold of it.

"I must wed her," he howled. "I told *maman* so, or I shall perish. I will become an Englishman. *Mon Dieu,* I am sad. I am fearfully mournful. I weep exceedingly. Have I not done all? I have eaten largely in public with Mr. Gordon. I have bought his shares and have sold them, but in my heart I cannot. When I return to Paris, I shall fight duels because I have written for Dreyfus with tears in my eye and my tongue in my cheek for sorrow. Where is she, Lord Bradstock? Tell me where she is? I will go to her and say I have done all and can no more!"

De Vere tackled him, too.

"My dear chap," said Bradstock, "I don't know her mind."

"She knows her own," said De Vere, with much bitterness, "and so does that boy Bob. I bought a bulldog of him, because she said she thought one would do me good. I don't know why, and now Bob sells me dogs by telegram, and I daren't refuse 'em."

"Great Scott!" said his host; "but why?"

"That young ruffian has an influence over her,"

mourned the poet. "He is always with her. He is capable of saying I am a 'rotter'; yes, a rotter, a dozen times a day if I refuse, and to have him doing that would be more than I can endure. I want her to love me, and so I buy his dogs. I have a bulldog which hasn't done me any good. All he has done is to tear my trousers and trample over my flower-beds. I have an Irish terrier who is now being cured of bulldog bites by a veterinary surgeon. I've a retriever who howls at night and makes the bulldog unhappy. I have a Borzois with bronchitis and no hair on his tail. Bob wrote to say the hair would grow if I put hair-wash on it myself. He said men couldn't be trusted to do it. And then I've Goby on my hands. I speak in confidence, Lord Bradstock."

"Of course," said Bradstock.

"Then I own I loathe Goby," said De Vere, viciously. "He has less brains than my bulldog, and I think the bulldog has less brains than the retriever. He reads poetry because she said he was to, and he makes me explain mine to him. Explain it! And he makes me row every day he's with me, and he says I'm not imitating Roosevelt if I don't. She said I was to imitate Roosevelt. Why should I? I loathe Republicans. She also told me I was to imitate Sven Hedin. On inquiry I found Sven

Hedin was an ass who explored deserts, and went without water for many days. Goby can do that, as my wine-cellar can testify. He says he only tastes water when he cleans his teeth, and then it makes him sick. And, though I keep wine for my friends, I am a water-drinker. How can I do without it? I am very unhappy."

"I should chuck Goby and give it up," said Bradstock.

"I wish I could," said the poet, "but my nature is an enduring one. We learn in suffering Gobies and bulldogs what we teach in song. A dog may be the friend of man, but a bulldog is a tailor's enemy. And I believe they gave Goby the V. C. to get rid of him. Do they ever give decorations to get rid of people?"

Bradstock said he thought so, and wondered what he could give De Vere.

And then the poet sighed and rose.

"I have to meet Goby and lunch with him. And afterward we read Shelley together, and then he will teach me billiards at his club. I loathe billiards. It is the most foolish game on earth except keeping bulldogs. And Goby's friends are not sympathetic. They are sportsmen, and ought to be hunted with bulldogs."

He went away sadly, and Bradstock lay on a sofa and laughed till he cried.

"Pen will be my death and the death of a dozen," he said. "And as for Bob — "

No sooner had De Vere departed than young Bramber was announced.

"Conceited young ass," said Bradstock. But Bramber was in the House, and was supposed to be doing very well. He had brains, no doubt, and the manner of Oxford (Balliol variety, as aforesaid) sat on him well. He made speeches, and Mr. Mytton congratulated him on one of them. Nothing but his passion for Penelope prevented him being as conceited as Bradstock supposed him to be. But it must be remembered that Bradstock couldn't make speeches.

"I thought I'd come and look you up," said Bramber. "I thought you could tell me something about Lady Penelope."

"I can't," replied Bradstock. "I spend all my afternoons in saying so. I've had Rivaulx and Austin de Vere and Gordon here already, and after you go I don't doubt that Goby or Plant will turn up. How do you get on with Plant? Do you know, Bramber, I believe Plant is the best man of the lot of you."

Bramber frowned.

"He has an accent that can be cut into slabs, to use his own dialect," said Bramber.

"Your own accent is equally disagreeable to an American," said Bradstock, who had been in the United States several times.

"I have no accent," said Bramber, haughtily.

"Oh," returned Bradstock. "And how do you get along with Plant?"

Bramber was obviously more jealous of Plant than any one. But he made a tremendous effort to be fair.

"He's a very able man," he said at last, "but there's no man I should find it so hard to get on with. He says just what he thinks in the most awful way. And because Lady Penelope said he was not to spend more than twenty-five pounds a week, he is living on ten shillings out of bravado. I hate bravado. He made me dine with him in Soho, and our dinners came to elevenpence each. Where is Lady Penelope?"

"I don't know," said Bradstock.

"I didn't see Plant yesterday," said Bramber, uneasily.

"The devil!"

"You don't think?"

"I don't know what to think," said Bradstock,

wickedly. "I hear that Jimmy Carew hasn't been seen for days, either."

Bramber fidgeted on his chair.

"She *can't* marry Carew. He's a thorough outsider."

"Women don't understand the word, my dear chap. How are you getting on in the House? And have you been motoring with Plant?"

"Yes," said Bramber; "we killed three fowls and a dog yesterday. And Plant was fined ten pounds a week ago. He said he would wire to Lady Penelope to know if that was business expenses. I believe he wants to break my neck."

"I shouldn't be surprised," said Bradstock. "Has he gone out alone to-day, do you think? I suppose you know Penelope is doing a lot of it now?"

"The devil she is!" said Bramber. "I think I'll go and look up Plant."

Bradstock got some amusement out of the situation, if Titania didn't.

CHAPTER VI.

Penelope came back to town about a week later and saw every one.

"I wonder whom I love," said Pen, "for I'm sure I love some one. And they are all so kind and sweet and good. I'm sorry I shall have to hurt so many of them, for the poor dears all adore me."

It was marvellous how they had developed in a short time under Pen's system, which was evidently sound, as Bradstock declared. Plant, under his ten-and-sixpence-a-week scheme, had lost a stone weight, and was as hard and fine as a coil of wire. His search after the people he had ruined gave him a peace of mind to which he had long been a stranger, for American millionaires in business have no peace of mind.

"I feel good," said Plant, meaning it both ways, "and my endurance of young Bramber has stiffened my moral fibre."

"Whether I marry you or not, Mr. Plant," said Penelope, "I am awfully pleased with you. And how has Lord Bramber behaved?"

"He's been death on what he called my accent," said Plant, a little bitterly, "and it is notorious I've none to speak of; and, for that matter, his own you could cut with a knife. However, I think he's a good boy, and will discover he has brains. I've talked to him straight, Lady Penelope. I told him you meant me to. I said he might be a lord and the son of an earl, but that he was a lazy, loafing scallawag, and that, if he'd been my son, I'd have cowhided him. That did him good; it made him sit up, I tell you. Oh, he fairly fizzled and felt like going for me, but he knew better. He has brains, and I've talked with members of your legislature who say he'll do well. Put this down to me, Lady Penelope. Credit me with this. I've looked after him like a baby, and I've hustled him around in my motor till he can't help going when he's out of it. You and me together, my dear young lady, could educate the entire universe. If you'll only marry me, I'll start a university on these lines of yours."

The idea was a pleasing one, but of course Pen pointed out to him that it was his duty to do it whether she married him or not.

"Duty is duty," said Pen. "I'm doing all this out of a sense of duty."

"Don't marry out of a sense of it," retorted

Plant. "I just want to be loved. I'm going around feeling I want to be loved. I've never been loved properly all my life, and I begin to hanker after it wildly. And, if you do marry me, Lady Penelope, I want you to understand right here and now that I don't want you to do your duty by me. If you begin to do that, I'll take a Colt's forty-five and scatter my brains out. I want love, that's what I want. I want it straight, without water in it."

"I see what you mean," said Penelope. "I think you are a very noble-hearted man, Mr. Plant."

And away went poor Plant to draw up a scheme for a university.

"I think I could almost love him," said the pensive Penelope. "I could — almost — "

Her contemplations were interrupted by Captain Goby. He was a little paler than usual, and perhaps a trifle more intelligent. And he was more in love than ever.

"I've done everything you told me," he said, as he sat down and eyed her wistfully. "I've gone into poetry like a bull at a hedge, Lady Penelope. I begin to see what it means. Old Austin (poor old josser) has taken the deuce's own pains over me. He's read 'The Lady of the Garden' to me seventeen times. He wrote it ten years ago. He says he wonders how he did it, and so do I. I've

been trying to write poetry to you, do you know. That showed me there must be some special gift in it, for I never did anything worth the horrid trouble. And I've been worrying the War Office like a bulldog. They say they'll think of me, and haven't gone any further, and talking of bulldogs, Bob's bulldog bit Austin de Vere, and he swore like a man. I *was* surprised. But if I were you, I'd tell Bob to stop sending him more dogs. He's very kind to them, but they worry him. Bob's prices are very high, too. How is Bob? Oh, by the way, I'm living on ten pounds a week. Need I reckon tailor's bills in, do you think? Oh, yes, this bulge is the Golden Treasury. I take it out and read a lyric between meals. The chaps at the Rag chaff me like blazes, but I don't mind so long as I improve. I want to improve so as to be worthy of your intellect, Lady Penelope."

"The poor dear," said Pen, when he was gone, "I think I could almost love him!"

As luck would have it, Bob and Austin de Vere came in almost at the same minute. For now Titania couldn't keep Bob away. For the matter of that, she did not want to. Bob was to be Penelope's safeguard. He was much better than Chloe Cadwallader, said Titania.

However, De Vere came in first. He held Penel-

ope's hand no longer than a poet should, as poets naturally hold girls' hands rather longer than other people.

"You are looking really well, Mr. de Vere," said Penelope, when she was free.

"I am well," said the poet, "exceedingly well in a way. My dear lady of the beautiful garden, I owe all that to you. At first I was afraid of Captain Goby. I told Lord Bradstock so the other day. I'm afraid I left him under a false impression as to my feelings to Goby, by the way. I'm quite proud of Goby. He says I am really a powerful man, and he made me row till I was worn out. And then he insisted that I should use Sandow's exerciser. I own I did it with reluctance. I pointed out to Goby that I did not wish to look like Mr. Sandow. Goby always stopped by the posters in which Mr. Sandow is lifting ten tons or so, and pointed out certain muscles to me as ideals. I was recalcitrant, for, although I admire Mr. Sandow immensely, I think muscle can be overdone. However, I used the machine, which is ingenious and elastic, and only dangerous if the hook comes out of the wall, and I've found I rather like it. I should miss it now. I think it imparts a certain vigour to verse, if not overdone. Oh —"

For in came Bob. He rushed at Pen and kissed her hair, and then bounced at the poet.

"I say is it true the bulldog bit you? I saw Goby yesterday in the park, and he said so," asked Bob, in great excitement.

"It is true," said the poet.

Penelope shook her head at the late owner of the dog.

"Oh, Bob! Mr. de Vere, I'm very sorry."

"So was I," said De Vere.

"Where did he bite you?" asked Bob, anxiously. "Was it the arm or the leg? And did he hang on like a proper bulldog? Baker says that if a bulldog once gets hold, you have to use a red-hot poker to make him let go. Did you use a red-hot poker?"

"He only snapped and fetched blood," said De Vere.

"Ah!" cried Bob, "I always thought he wasn't a real good bulldog."

"At any rate, he bit the Irish terrier," said the poet. "I mean the one you sold to me for three pounds."

"I'm glad he did, sir. That Irish terrier, though he's splendidly bred, Baker says, has an awful temper and is very troublesome. Does Rollo, the retriever, howl much at night, sir?"

"Oh, not so very much," said De Vere. "It's only when the moon is near the full that he does his best."

"I never thought of that," said Bob, "but now I remember that it was very moony when I sent him over to you. Baker said you'd like him. His kennel is next to Baker's house."

"I'm much obliged to Baker," said De Vere. "But the tail of the Borzois is still bald, Bob."

Bob opened his eyes wide.

"Oh, dear, I thought you would have cured him by now; and how about his bronchitis?"

"That's better, I hope and trust," said the poet. And Penelope, who was very greatly touched by his kindness to all these dogs, sent Bob into the library.

"It's so good of you to be kind to Bob," she said. "Bob's a dear, and he adores me. He says that he's going to live with me always, even when I'm married."

"Oh!" gasped De Vere. "We were talking about Goby, I think, when dear Bob came in. You'll find him much improved, I'm sure, my dear Lady Penelope. He has read a great deal of Shelley and Keats and Browning with me. He was especially struck with 'Sordello.' I read it to him and he sat with his hand to his forehead taking

AUSTIN DE VERE

He wrote poetry, and abhorred bulldogs and motor-cars

it all in. And every now and again he said, 'Great Scott!' which is his way of expressing wonderment and admiration. I do not know its origin. I've written to Doctor Murray to ask him if he knows. And Goby, oh, yes, you'll find him improved. I've done my best with him, and I've really struggled hard. Any improvement you notice is, I really believe, under you and Providence, due to me."

And when he went, Penelope sat thinking.

"The poor dear, how nicely he took the bulldog bites and the howling of the retriever. I think — I think I could almost love him!"

And that afternoon and evening she saw Bramber and Carteret Williams and Jimmy Carew and Gordon, and they were all most marvellously improved. Bramber was alert and bright, and began to show that he had some ambition in him, and, if he did not tell Penelope his exact mind about Plant, he did show some little appreciation of the American's qualities.

"Associating with him has done you good," said Pen. "I see it has. You lived far too much for yourself, Lord Bramber. I cannot endure selfishness."

"I'm not selfish any more, I think," said Bramber. "I rather like Plant. He seems a man, take him all around. He is abrupt, perhaps, and brutal.

I own I've found him trying, and he says things one finds it hard to forgive."

"Yes, he told me," said Pen, delightedly. "Oh, he told me he said you ought to be beaten severely, and he said you took it very nicely. Did you?"

Bramber bit his lip.

"I did."

"That's right," said Pen. "Oh, I'm improving you all *so* much. You've no idea how much improved you are. Mr. Mytton said he'd make something out of you, Lord Bramber."

"Did he really?"

"Oh, yes. He said he made fair successes out of very much worse material."

"He's quite a dear," she sighed, when he was gone, but, before she could add that she might almost love him, Carew and Williams came in together. And before she could greet them, Gordon came, too. Williams eyed him with strange ferocity, for he was by nature a hater of Hebrews, and wanted to dust the floor with him. Pen, who was as quick as lightning, caught his glances and said to him, sweetly:

"I think you would get on nicely with Mr. Gordon."

And Williams blenched visibly.

"Oh, I couldn't leave Carew," he said. "I'm

deep in art, very deep; I adore it. Carew has introduced me to several Academicians, and I have bought a box of paints. One Academician took me home with him and showed me his pictures. He doesn't agree with Jimmy altogether, and he says Jimmy will alter his opinions presently. His idea is that when a man is an A. R. A., he is only beginning, you see. He also explained to me the attitude of the R. A. with regard to the Chantrey Bequest. He says that if they found a good picture not by an Academician, they would buy it, which is interesting, isn't it? He was painting a picture called 'War,' and wanted my opinion. I said I'd ask Jimmy, because I didn't know anything about war except what I'd seen. I don't know why he was chuffy about it. I find artists get chuffy and huffy very quick, and I don't know what for. Do you think there will be war soon?"

Penelope didn't know, and said she wanted eternal peace and happiness for every one, and meant having it if it could be got by any legitimate influence.

"War is horrible!"

"It is," said Carew, who joined in just here, after getting away from Gordon, who told him to buy Hittites at 3⅛. "War is horrid. Williams is always talking of it."

"I'm not," said Williams, angrily. "I want peace, eternal peace and happiness for every one."

"Ah, so do I," put in Gordon. "My idea is to have a peaceful life, far from the roar of London, in a deep green vale, where I shall hear no one talking of shares, and where mines are unknown, and there are no Chinese or crushing reports. Why is it that most reports from mines are crushing? I wish I knew."

"Ah, how sweet it would all be," said beautiful Penelope. "You could keep cows, Mr. Gordon."

"I adore them," said Gordon. "There is a breed without horns, isn't there?"

"They look incomplete," said Jimmy.

"What are you painting now?" asked Pen.

"I'm not really painting, I'm modelling in clay, as you told me," said the obsequious lover. "Don't you remember saying I was to model in clay? I'm doing Williams in clay. He looks very well in it. I'm also doing a bull going at a gate. When I get tired of Williams, I do the bull, and when I'm fatigued by the bull I go back to Williams."

"And are they like?" asked Penelope.

"Oh, exactly," replied Carew.

And the interesting conversation was interrupted by Chloe and Ethel. But Penelope said to herself that they were all dears.

"Mr. Williams is greatly improved," she murmured happily. "And Mr. Carew looks more healthy and less engrossed in himself. I was awfully glad to hear Mr. Gordon speak like that about a peaceful life."

And Williams slipped Carew on the door-step and went to his club. He roared of war till two o'clock in the morning, and then got three out-of-work war correspondents in the corner and told them the great story of his love. But Jimmy went down to Chelsea, and damned modelling in clay to other impressionist painters, and had a real good time. As for Gordon of the "deep green vale," he went home and found a clerk waiting with a bundle of cables from all quarters of the mining globe. He sent a wire to Bramber to be let off an engagement to hear a debate on drains.

On the whole, every one was tolerably happy, if we do not include Titania and the retriever who howled at nights.

CHAPTER VII.

It is possible that Penelope never enjoyed herself so much as she did at this period. She was so busy that she had no time to worry; her team took all her time. She was young, she was beautiful, she was adored, she was popular, she was even notorious. A dozen reporters dogged her footsteps, and when they lost her they followed her lovers. They haunted her door-step armed with kodaks; they invented paragraphs; they hunted her men and her maids. They made love to the girls, and seduced the men into neighbouring bars. One newspaper man, who belonged to the *Mayfair Daily*, got into her establishment as a footman, and was discovered by the butler drawing Penelope at dinner when he should have been drawing corks. A search in his clothes revealed some pencils and a note-book and another book of drawings. They were of such a character that the reporter was put outside into the street. The butler could have forgiven the sketch of his mistress: there was one of himself that no man could forgive.

The great desire of all these men was to spot the winner. Penelope's maid, Harriet Weekes, who was more or less engaged to Timothy Bunting, the groom (a sad *mésalliance,* by the way), found it impossible to go out without being accosted respectfully by a new admirer, who tried to lead the conversation around to her mistress.

"If you please, my lady, another of them spoke to me to-day. I hope, my lady, you don't think it my fault," said Weekes.

"What do they say?" asked Penelope, curiously. She took great interest in the manners and customs of other classes, perhaps with a view of altering them when she got time.

"Oh, my lady, they always say the same thing. I think men are very much the same all over the world. They say 'It's a fine day,' even if it's raining, and of course it is, and they say they want to walk a little way with me (begging your pardon), and that I am very beautiful, and that they have long loved me, if you please, my lady, and have been trying to speak about it for years. And I tell 'em I don't want 'em, and I don't, to be sure, though one (he's on the *Piccadilly Circus Gazette*) is a very handsome man with a heagle's glance, dressed in gray tweeds. And they won't be put off, I assure you, my lady. Men on newspapers are

hextremely persevering with a fine flow of language. And if, being persuaded to take a little walk, for they are difficult to put off by trade, I do take one, they begin to ask, begging your pardon, I'm sure, my lady, if I am your sister, and I'm sure I'm as like you as a butterfly is to a beetle, as Mr. Bunting says, though he adores the ground I walk on, if he's to be believed, which I'm not sure of yet, and the butler is very angry with me about the whole affair. And one, who said he was the editor of the *Times,* which I don't believe in the least, because it doesn't seem likely, does it, my lady, that the editor of the *Times* would do such things himself? said he wanted to marry me and put me on the staff as his lovely bride. I must say he spoke most beautifully, and he said he knew Captain Goby, and also Mr. Gordon, and he said they were getting thin he thought. And another, quite the gentleman, though by his trousers poor and careful, said he owned most of the *Daily Telegraph.* And I couldn't help looking at his clothes. He was very quick, and said that was owing to the competition of the half-penny papers. Would I save the *Daily Telegraph* from himpending ruin by telling him which it would be, he said. And I said flatly that I wouldn't. I never saw such

wicked impudence. Oh, yes, my lady, your hair's done now, and it's as lovely as a dream."

And, as Miss Weekes finished, she wondered, quite as much as any of the newspaper men, who it was to be.

"It's my belief," she said to Timothy, a little later, "that my lady is beginning to incline to one of 'em. I've noticed she's quieter like and more gentle. And there's a soft sadness in her eye and a colour that comes and goes."

"There ain't one of the biling worthy of her," said Timothy, bitterly. "But there, Miss Weekes, there ain't no man worthy of a real beautiful, good lidy. A fair wonder how I dares to hope that some day far off, when motor-cars has killed every 'orse, you'll be Mrs. Bunting."

"It's a great come down, Tim," said Harriet. "Mr. Gubbles says he wonders, too."

"If he wasn't the butler, and old, I'd plug 'im," said Timothy, crossly. "It's all right for me to wonder, but he ain't in it."

"Ah, but class distinctions is hard to get over, Mr. Bunting," said Harriet. "You must pardon a butler's feelings. Even Mr. Gubbles has his feelings. And he agrees with you that there's no one but a duke ought to marry our dear lady. And she demeaning herself (if I dare say so) with Acad-

emicians and war correspondencies and Jew men; not but what Mr. Gordon is very gentlemanly and generous. Only yesterday, Mr. Bunting, he says to me when he met me outside, 'Do you read?' And I says, 'Yes, sir,' being some flustered, and he says, 'You read that.' And it was a five-pound note. And he adds something about 'your vote and hinfluence.' But I can't do it, Mr. Bunting, I can't. If it was Captain Goby, I might, and if it was young Lord Bramber I might more so, and even if it was Mr. de Vere, with a duke remote in his family, but for a Jewish man I can't. So I said, 'Thank you, sir,' and he went off. But some one is beginnin' to rise up in my lady's mind, I saw it plainly when I was dressing her. It would be worth more than five pounds to know who is risin'."

"Yes," said Timothy. "'Ow much would it run to, do you think?"

"I believe it would be worth a public 'ouse."

"Beer and spirits?" asked Timothy, eagerly.

"And a corner 'ouse at that," replied Harriet, nodding her head.

"Oh, 'Arriet," said Timothy, with a gasp, "you fairly dazzle me."

The newspaper men had dazzled Harriet.

But indeed what she said seemed true to her. And it seemed true to Lord Bradstock, who had,

like the man of the *Circus Gazette,* an eagle's glance.

"She has been playing fair," said Bradstock, "but one of them is drawing ahead, Titania."

"Good heavens, who is he, and how do you know?" asked Titania.

"It's intuition," said Bradstock, "intuition combined with, or founded on, a little observation. She's different, Titania. She takes no interest in the London County Council."

"You don't say so!" cried the duchess, in alarm.

Bradstock nodded.

"It's a fact. I asked her if she had read the last debate, and she hadn't, and when I mentioned the Deceased Wife's Sister she yawned."

"That looks bad," said Titania, "for only a week ago she raved about her, and Goring said he'd vote for her if she insisted on it. And she did insist, and tears came in her eyes about the poor thing."

"Well, I told you so," said Bradstock, "and I do hope it isn't Williams. I'm afraid of Williams. He's capable of knocking her down and carrying her off on his shoulder. Do you remember with what joy she read us the account of the savage tribe somewhere (was it the east of London?) where they do that?"

"It made me shiver with apprehension," said Titania. "Oh, if she was only married safely to a good duke, one not like Goring! Is there a good duke, Augustin?"

"Several, so I'm informed," replied Bradstock, "and there are quite a number of good earls, some quite admirable. But I wish you'd get hold of Chloe Cadwallader, and find out something."

Titania bristled like a porcupine.

"There is no need to find out anything about Mrs. Cadwallader," she said. "If Penelope wasn't too dangerously innocent to be single, she would not have anything to do with her."

"I'm sure the poor woman was only silly," said Bradstock. "Haven't we all been silly in our time, Titania? Didn't I marry twice? And you married once."

"I'll speak to her," said the duchess, hastily. "If we can only find out who it is, we can, I'm sure, prevent her doing as she says and making a secret marriage of it. The scandal would be horrid. Oh, Augustin, suppose she did it, and had a large family suddenly. I should die of it."

"Good heavens," said Bradstock, "you alarm me, Titania, you are so gloomy. She would surely acknowledge her marriage then?"

Titania threw up her hands.

"Augustin, I'm sure of nothing with Penelope. I cannot answer for her. She will bring my gray hairs with sorrow — "

"To cremation," said Bradstock. "She has invested money in a crematorium."

"I thought it was dairy-farming," cried Titania. "Oh, but think, Augustin, of the horror of the situation as it might be! What would her Royal Highness say to me? Imagine her marrying and keeping it dark, and having, as I say, a large family suddenly without a husband producible on the moment to answer natural inquiries! Imagine her saying *then* that her marriage was her own business, and her certificate of marriage firmly withheld by a young and obstinate mother in a safe! She has a safe. She has a safe, Augustin, with many keys. I wish I could get at it, and find things out that are in it. I wish I knew a burglar, a good honest and reliable burglar, married and trustworthy, that I could send in to break it open. Most girls have a desk with an ordinary key, easy to open, but Penelope has a Lord Milner's safe with patent things to keep it shut. It's not natural, it's wicked. Oh, I did hope, when I found out what the duke was like and what his ways were, that I knew the extent of my troubles, but there is no end to them, and Penelope begins where Goring leaves off."

"Is it as bad as that?" asked Bradstock.

"And then there's Bob —"

"By Jove," said Augustin, "I believe Bob's the key to the safe! Titania, he's more likely to find something out than any one."

Titania nodded solemnly.

"Augustin, you are right. I'll speak to Bob."

"Let me do it."

"No, no, Augustin. He is very quick and suspicious, and he loves her, he adores her. This requires a feminine intelligence. I will work upon him quietly."

And she went away to work upon Bob quietly.

CHAPTER VIII.

Now Titania believed that she was very smart and very clever, and that she would do things subtly and do them better than Bradstock or a barrister, even if he was a K. C. And as it is the most invariably weak point in people that they think young people fools, or at any rate easily hoodwinked, she really believed that Bob, her dearly beloved young scoundrel of a grandson, would be as easy to work on as butter. And yet she had the sense to see that Bob adored Penelope.

"I am very greatly troubled about Penelope, Bob," she said to him, as soon as she got him alone.

"Don't you worry about Pen, granny," replied Bob, cheerfully, "she can take care of herself. Why, she can drive a motor-car now up to about thirty miles an hour, and Geordie Smith says she's all there. And so does old Guth. He had long talks with her, and he says she has brains. I tell you old Guth knows 'em when he sees 'em."

Titania nodded.

"Oh, I know she is clever, dear, but her ideas are so extraordinary."

"Ain't they?" said Bob. "I do wonder which of 'em she'll marry, don't you?"

"Indeed I do," replied his grandmother. "Have you any idea, Bob, which she likes best?"

Bob shook his head.

"Not me. I wish it was Goby; old Goby is a ripping good sort. He knows what's what, does old Goby."

Goby tipped him freely and frequently, and Bob sold him a spavined pony, aged fifteen years.

"He's a bit of a fool, of course," said Bob, thoughtfully. "Do you know, granny, he isn't the judge of horses you'd think he is?"

"Does Penelope ever confide in you, Bob?" asked Titania.

There was a touch of anxiety in her voice that the boy felt at once. He put his head on one side and looked at her out of the corner of his eye. He didn't answer the question.

"I say, granny, don't you think I can have a bigger allowance now? I find mine much too little. If I had ten shillings a week more, I could get on for a bit."

"You shall have it," said Titania. "Does she ever confide in you, Bob?"

"Some," said Bob, carelessly.

"Which do you think she likes best?" asked Titania.

"I don't know," said Bob, "but I dare say I could find out. I say, should you be very angry if it was Gordon?"

Titania uttered a little scream.

"Great heavens, Bob, I should die of it!"

Bob sat down and looked at her.

"He's not bad, granny, not half mean, oh, no, not at all!"

He had given Bob as much as he gave Miss Harriet Weekes about three days before.

"I rather like him," said Bob. "Pen thinks he's much improved since she put him in harness with the Frenchy. It touched her his going up in a balloon. I say, may I go up in a balloon? Rivaulx said I might."

"No!" screamed his grandmother. "Oh, Bob, you wouldn't?"

"I won't if you don't want me to," sighed Bob, "but it's a horrid disappointment. He says going up in one is jolly, and London underneath is ripping. If I don't, will you ask grandfather to give me another hunter?"

"Yes, of course," said poor Titania; "but what do you think about Penelope? Could you find out anything, Bob, if I let you go and stay with her?"

Bob's eyes gleamed.

"Rather," he said, "of course. But I needn't worry about old Guth if I do? I've been working very hard, and I think a holiday would do him good, too. I'm very much overworked. Do I look tired, granny? I always feel tired now in my head. Guth says a breakdown from overwork is much worse than most fatal diseases."

"You shall go to Penelope if she'll have you," said his anxious grandmother. "Do you have headaches, Bob?"

"Not headaches," said Bob, "I shouldn't call 'em headaches exactly. They're pains, and old Guth says he had 'em when he was at Oxford. They get worse, he says, and then the breakdown comes, and you have to take a very long rest. I'll go on working if you like, though."

He sighed.

"You shall go to your cousin's," said Titania, "and my dear, dear Bob, keep your eye on Penelope and tell me all you discover. Her ideas are very strange, you know, and we are all so anxious about her future."

"So am I," said Bob. "If she married the wrong one I shall be out of it. I couldn't get on well with old De Vere, and if she married him I'm quite convinced he wouldn't buy any more dogs. I want her to marry Goby or Bramber. But I think Bramber is rather mean in some ways, and very thoughtless of others. I told him I wanted some salmon fishing at his father's place in Scotland, and he's said nothing about it since."

"I shouldn't mind Lord Bramber so much," said Titania. "But I'm afraid it won't be Bramber."

"Cheer up," said her grandson. "I'll look after her. But don't forget about the extra ten shillings and the horse. Could you give me the ten shillings for six weeks now, granny?"

And he went off to Penelope's house and marched in on her.

"Pen, I'm coming to stay with you if you'll have me," he said.

"Of course I will," said Penelope. "But how did you manage it?"

"I'm overworked," said Bob, solemnly, "and sitting on chairs and learning Latin don't agree with me. I want more open air, I think, or I shall get consumption."

He was fat and ruddy and as strong as a bull-calf. He put his arm around Pen's neck.

"I say, Pen, I do love you," he said. "I think it's rot I'm so young, or I'd have married you myself. Granny's in an awful state about you, Pen. She asked me if I knew who it was you liked best, and she threw out hints a foot wide that I was to find out if I could."

"Indeed," said Pen; "and what did you say?"

Bob chuckled.

"I said the best thing would be for me to come and stay with you. And that's why I'm here. But I say, Pen, I'll never sneak, not even if you marry Mr. de Vere. Granny's raised my allowance ten bob a week, and I'm to have another hunter. I got too big for the pony, so I sold him to Goby; Goby looked very melancholy, but he said he wanted him badly for some reason. And he said he hoped I'd be his friend always. I like poor old Goby. I think I'll go into the park, Pen. My things will be here by and by. Couldn't we go to the theatre to-night? There's a ripping farce with a fight in it at the Globe. And will you have plum pudding for dinner, and ice meringues?"

He went into the park and met Williams there.

"I say, Mr. Williams, where's Mr. Carew?" he asked.

"Damn Carew," said Williams. "I don't know where he is, and I don't want to."

"I'm staying at my cousin's," said Bob.

"At Lady Penelope's?" asked the war correspondent.

"That's it," said Bob. "Would you like to know what theatre we are going to to-night?"

"Yes," said Williams, eagerly.

Bob shook his head.

"I don't suppose I ought to tell you. Tell me something very exciting about some bloody war, Mr. Williams."

Williams grunted.

"Or an execution. Have you ever seen heads chopped off with a sword?"

"Often in China, Bob."

"I say, what fun!" said Bob. "Tell me all about it. Is it true they smoke cigarettes while they are being chopped? And do they mind? Could I see one if I went out? I say, if you'll describe it, I'll see if I can tell you about the theatre."

Carteret Williams described it.

"Seventeen!" said Bob. "By Jove, I'll tell this to Penelope. She'll be greatly interested. Do you think I could be a war correspondent, Mr. Williams? I'd like to be, because Latin wouldn't be needed. I'm awfully sorry for war correspondents in those days when no one but the Roman chaps did any fighting. I've enjoyed that story of yours

more than anything I've heard for years, Mr. Williams. When they write about these things in books, why don't they describe the blood the way you do? It's the Globe we're going to; there's a ripping farce there. I wish they would do an execution of pirates. I say, don't tell Pen I told you; she might be waxy with me. Think of something else to tell me. Good-bye."

And he went to look at the ducks.

"Williams is all right," said Bob; "I wonder if it is Williams."

And at home Pen began to know who it was. And Ethel Mytton began to know it was some one. And so did Chloe Cadwallader.

Miss Weekes was right, there is no mistake about that.

CHAPTER IX.

PENELOPE was certainly on the verge of being in love, to go no farther than that. She discovered that certain of the horde had a curious tendency to disappear from her mind, though none of them lost any opportunity of appearing in her drawing-room. She was so sorry for those she didn't love that her kindness to them increased. Her dread of the one she began to adore forbade her to show how soft she had grown to him. Not even Ethel and Chloe together could make anything out of it, which shows every one, of course, that they were two simple idiots, or that Penelope had a very remarkable character. It seems to me that the latter must have been the case, for Chloe was no fool in spite of the folly she had shown on one particular occasion.

"Am I a fool?" she asked Ethel Mytton, "or is Penelope the deepest, darkest mystery of modern times? I am convinced she has made her choice."

"Oh, which do you think?" asked Ethel, with

much anxiety. "Do you — do you think it is Captain Goby?"

"I don't know," replied Chloe; "it may be. I give it up. I shall ask Bob."

"I've asked him," said Ethel, "and he won't say anything. I think he knows more than we do. He's a sweet boy, but just as cunning as a ferret."

But of course Bob knew no more than they did, though he would never own to it. He threw out casual hints that he was wiser than his elders, and the only one he was in the least frank with was Lord Bradstock, who asked him to lunch and was infinitely amused with him.

"I say, Lord Bradstock, if you'll keep it dark, I'll tell you something!"

Bradstock promised to keep it as dark as a dry plate.

"All these women think I know who Penelope's sweet on, and I don't. And, what's more, I wouldn't tell if I did. Would you?"

"Certainly not," said Bradstock.

"You can't think how I'm chased," said Bob. "Ethel Mytton is the worst. She's dead nuts on poor Goby, and Goby doesn't see her when Pen's in the room. And Mrs. Cadwallader, she's always mugging up to me with chocolates or something to get things out of me. And the newspaper Johnnies

are on me, too. And Williams takes me out, and Carew (I don't care for Carew), and I like Goby best. Mr. de Vere is a rotter, don't you think? The marquis was at Pen's, and he said that if Pen didn't marry him he'd go up in a balloon and never come back. I want him to take me in a balloon. Don't you think I might go? Granny's cross when I speak of it. I've always wanted to go in a balloon, and I think it hard lines I can't go because she doesn't like 'em. Pen won't go, either. She thinks that if she did, Rivaulx would never let her come down again, or something. I daresay he wouldn't; he's quite mad, I think, sometimes. Baker says all Frenchmen are mad. Do you think so?"

Bradstock didn't know; he wasn't sure of it, though he owned to thinking it was possible.

"After all, Bob," he said, when Bob went at last, "and after all I dare say Penelope won't marry any of them."

And of course that is what a good many people said. They said it was Lady Penelope's fun. The Marchioness of Rigsby, who settled every one's affairs, said so to Titania.

"Why wasn't she beaten, my dear, when she was young?" asked the marchioness. "I was severely beaten; it did me good; it gave me sense. I always used to beat my girls with the flat of

my hand, and now they are *most* sensible and married excellently, although I own they are not beauties. I can afford to own it now. I shall speak to Penelope myself."

She did it and was routed. Pen was direct; she beat no one, and certainly did not beat about the bush. She had no fear of the world, and dreaded no marchioness.

"I'll attend to my own affairs, thank you," said Pen.

"My dear love," said the marchioness, "you ought to have been beaten while you were still young. This conduct of yours is a scandal. It is merely a means of attracting public notice. And I am old enough to speak about it. I will speak about it."

Pen left her speaking and went out.

"She is distinctly rude," said the marchioness, viciously. "I wish she was about ten and I was her mother!"

But Pen could not endure being spoken to.

"I love him," said Pen, "and what business is it of theirs? If they disapprove I shall hate them! If they approve I shall hate them worse. Oh, I almost wish I was going to marry some one who would make them die!"

"Mark me," said the marchioness to Titania,

" this will end in her marrying a groom. Has she a good-looking one? "

Titania started.

" Oh, a very good-looking one," she cried.

" What did I say? Remember what I said," said the marchioness, darkly. " No really good girl could act as she does. She will marry a groom! "

She went around saying so in revenge for Penelope's want of politeness. The journalists took Timothy Bunting's photograph, and Miss Weekes was proud till she heard the dreadful rumour. Timothy beat a man on a paper, and Bob was delighted. Titania took to her bed, and said the end of the world was at hand. Bradstock laughed till he cried, and cut the marchioness in the park. Her husband was very much pleased at this, and said it served her right. Chloe Cadwallader wrote her first letter since the scandal to Cadwallader in the Rockies, for she felt he would be the only man in the world who hadn't heard of it. Ethel lay wait for Captain Goby, and asked him to kill some one. There was not a soul in London who did not hear of it. And then Timothy quarrelled with Harriet Weekes. He went to Penelope, and with a crimson face and bated breath and much humbleness asked to be sent down to the country.

"You shall go," said Penelope, with great decision. "I can trust you, I know."

"My lady, you can trust me with untold gold and diamonds," replied Timothy Bunting, almost with tears.

"I shall send you to a house of mine you have never heard of," said Penelope. "And I expect you, Bunting, not to write to any one from there. I do not wish any one to know I live there."

"I'll not tell the Harchbishop of Canterbury 'imself, my lady, not if he begged me on his knees, with lighted candles in his 'and," said Bunting. "And, above all, my lady, I'll not tell it to Miss Weekes. Her and me 'ave quarrelled, and 'ave parted for hever. And I wouldn't trust her, my lady, not farther than you can sling a bull by the tail, my lady. I've trusted her to my rueing, so I have, and if she finds out hanything she'll sell it to the *Times,* which 'ave promised her a public 'ouse at a corner."

This revelation of the methods of Printing House Square shocked Penelope dreadfully.

"Oh, I always thought the *Times* was a respectable journal," she said.

But Timothy Bunting shook his head.

"Their sportin' tips ain't a patch on many of the penny papers, my lady. But don't you forget what

I says of Miss Weekes. She's a serpent in your boodore a-coiling everywhere, and speaking to newspaper men outside the harea like an 'ousemaid. Not but that I knows an 'ousemaid far above such dirty work, my lady."

A little encouragement might have led him to say more about the housemaid who would not condescend to talk with journalists. But Penelope gave him an address, verbally.

"You will go to this place to-morrow," she said. "There are no horses now, but there will be next week. I trust you to do what I tell you."

"Miss — my lady, I mean," said Timothy, proudly, "I wouldn't reveal where I was if the Hemperor of Germany crawled to me for that purpose all along of the ground, making speeches as he went."

Penelope smiled at her faithful henchman kindly, and she wondered how it happened that he thought of placing the emperor in such an absurd position; a position, too, which was very unlikely.

"Now are you sure you remember, Bunting?" she asked.

"Miss Mackarness, Moat 'Ouse, near Spilsby, Lincolnshire," repeated Timothy.

"And you will speak personally to Miss Mackarness, who will give you every instruction," said

his young mistress. "I hope you don't drink, Bunting?"

"Never," said Bunting, promptly, "at least I won't from now on till you give the word, my lady. But, my lady, as I'm goin' from here I don't mind revealin' to you that Mr. Gubbles does. Mr. Gubbles 'as been very unkind to me, and — "

"That will do," said Penelope. "Good-bye, Bunting. I expect to see you in about a month. It may be less."

"I 'opes, my lady, it will be much less," said the groom, and as he went away he nodded his close-cropped head.

"This is a damned rum start," he murmured. "Wot's up, I wonder? This 'ere Miss Mackarness was 'ousekeeper at Upwell Castle, and I'm a Dutchman if any one of us 'as ever 'eard of Moat 'Ouse. She's goin' to do it, as she said, goin' to be married and keep it dark. Women is wonderful strange and, so to speak, dreadful. I thot I knew 'Arriet Weekes through and through, and she turned out to be a serpent with false teeth, ready to sell Lady Penelope to the *Times*. And my lady 'as turned me round 'er finger. I'm knee-deep in secret hoaths, and, without knowin' what I was doin', I've swore off drink. Well, I always did like ginger-beer!"

But he sighed all the same. And that afternoon he packed up and disappeared, and no one knew what had become of him. Neither he nor any one of those who hunted for news had any notion of the fame which would presently be his. Nor did Penelope see quite what she had done when this nice-looking young man suddenly vanished by her orders.

But Penelope was in love.

CHAPTER X.

Love is a pathological state which can only be cured by one means. It is a disease, and robs the most humourous of their humour. When Rabelais was in love he no doubt wrote poems which he afterward destroyed. When Dante was in love he did the Paradiso. When he cheered up he wrote the Inferno. Neither of these is any joke. But then, Dante had no more humour than Penelope. It can be imagined (or it cannot be imagined) how unhumourous Pen became when she found she had made her choice between Plant and De Vere and Goby and Carew and Williams and Bramber and Gordon and Rivaulx. She wept at night over those she could not marry. And it added grief to grief to think that the unmarried would probably relapse into their evil ways.

"What can one poor girl do with so many?" she asked. "I'm sure they will turn around on me, and once more follow their dreadful instincts! And they have improved so much!"

The result of her sorrow was such pity that every poor wretch of them all was convinced she loved him better and better. They were quite cheerful. They looked at each other almost sympathetically. They grieved for each other, and struggled on the hard cinder-path of duty, with Penelope at least a long lap ahead. The amount of good they did was wonderful. Plant got his university started, Rivaulx went over to Paris and asked Dreyfus to dinner, Goby was deep in Imperial Yeomanry and rifle ranges, Bramber spoke on every opportunity in the House and voted with the insistence of a whip. De Vere wrote a monograph on outdoor sports, with an appendix on bulldogs. He also owned that poetry was not everything, and went so far as to say that the poet laureate was a very good fellow. Gordon floated a company without any water in the capital, and ran the whole affair with absolute honesty and no waiver clause. Carew learned to draw, and spoke sober truth about the Chantry Bequest.

Williams never swore in public, and painted in water-colours. And none of them played bridge or went into good society.

"And when they know?" said poor Penelope.

"I wonder if I ought not to sacrifice him and myself on the altar of duty?" said Pen. But she

was in love, and the motor-car in which she was to disappear stood ready. She made weekly trips in it with Bob. Sometimes they stayed away for three days, sometimes even for a week.

"Oh, Bob, I'm so unhappy: so happy," said Pen.

And Bob looked at her critically.

"Well, you look stunning, anyhow," he replied, "you get better looking every day, Pen. Old De Vere said so. He let on that you were a cross between a lily and a rose, or some such rot. You mark me, Pen, he'll go back to poetry if you marry him, and give up dogs. I don't want him to do that. Baker has some pups coming on, a new kind of very savage dog, and I'm halves in 'em. Can't you give me a tip as to whether it's De Vere? If it is, I'll sell him one now, cheap."

But Pen looked beautiful and kept her mouth shut. Neither Bob nor Titania nor Bradstock could extract a word from her. And, nevertheless, the whole world grew suspicious. The society papers said she had made her choice. The sporting papers gave tips. They said, "For the *Lady Penelope Stakes* we give Plant or Bramber," or at least one of them did. Others selected De Vere, and one rude man said a rank outsider would get it. Of course he didn't believe in Pen's word. But then, no one did.

And still Pen kept her teeth shut and was as obstinate as a government mule to all persuasion. Ethel cried and said:

"Oh, is it Captain Goby?"

Chloe laughed and laid traps for Penelope saying:

"Oh, by the way, I saw Lord Bramber just now."

Or it might be De Vere or Carew or Williams. But no one got a rise out of Penelope.

"I am entirely determined to give a lead to those who wish to be married without publicity. I shall found a society presently," said Penelope.

When Titania, whom nothing could discourage, went at her furiously, Bradstock smiled.

"If she has a daughter, some day we shall see the girl married in Westminster Abbey," said Bradstock. But even he was very curious.

"Have you found out anything yet, Bob?" he asked that young financier.

"I'm on the way," said Bob, "give me time, Lord Bradstock. I feel sure it's not De Vere. He's buying all the dogs I offer him. If he was sure, he wouldn't."

But Bradstock wasn't certain. Penelope might have no humour, but she was quite equal to ordering De Vere to buy in order to blind Bob.

"I never thought of that," said Bob. "I frankly

own Pen's a deal worse than Euclid. And I never thought to say that of anything."

And upon a certain day in June, when June was doing its best to live up to the poet's ideal, Pen disappeared, by herself, leaving Bob at home with Guthrie, who now came over each day to keep the young vagabond doing something. She came back after lunch, and Bob found her abnormally silent. She had nothing to say, and there was a curious far-off look in her eyes. Her interest in dogs was nil; she showed no appreciation of ferrets; when he spoke she said "Oh" and "Ah" and "what's that you say?" And Bob had no suspicion whatsoever, just as clever people never have when they might be expected to show their wisdom.

When she did speak, though, it was to the point.

"I think, Bob, it is time you went back to your grandmother's," she declared, suddenly, and back he went in spite of all his cajoleries. Pen was very strange, he thought, and rather beastly. There certainly was a change in her, for she dismissed Harriet Weekes with a douceur which did not really sweeten that lady's departure.

And in the afternoon Pen casually remarked to Chloe that she was going out of town for three days. When she said so the motor-car was at the door, and Geordie Smith was there too.

If Timothy Bunting had known that Smith was as deep in his lady's confidence as he was himself, he would have been jealous. But he must have been, for Pen said to him, when they were out of Piccadilly:

"How long will it take to get to Spilsby, Smith?"

"My lady, with this new racing-car I'll get there when you like," replied Smith, firmly.

Pen remembered that Bob said Smith's ambition was to ride through the city regardless of fines.

"I wouldn't try to do it under three hours," she said.

"Unless we are followed," said Smith. "If we are followed, my lady, may I let her go?"

"Yes," said Penelope.

Geordie Smith nodded to himself.

"Fines be damned, and legal limits ditto," said Smith to himself; "wait, my darling, till we get through the traffic."

He meant "darling" for his new car. He adored it as much as he did his mistress. He used to dream of it at night and had nightmares about it. Dream ruffians cut up his tires; he was in the middle of Salisbury Plain without petrol; "she" refused to spark; he was held up by gigantic policemen with stop watches the size of a church clock. But now she moved under him smooth and cosy,

with a vast reserve of power; she was quick, swift, docile, intelligent, fearless of policemen, careless of the limping law.

"If my lady wants to go quick, I'm the man," said Geordie. "But I wonder what's up?"

Geordie played the car as Joachim plays the violin, or Paderewski the piano. She skated, she swam, she shot like a water-beetle, she was responsive to his lightest touch. He heard her music as every engineer does, and found it as lovely as a dream song.

"Oh, for a clear road," said the player. He found some of it clear before they reached Barnet, and then he fingered the keyboard, as it were, like a master.

"Horses, horses," said Smith, "the poor miserable things! Ain't I sorry for Tim Bunting! Here we go, my lady."

He broke the law magnificently, and with such skill that Penelope wondered. But only once he ran against the law in the shape of a policeman, north of Hatfield, who saw him coming and signalled to him to stop.

"Shall I?" said Smith.

"No!" shrieked Pen, against the tide of wind.

They passed him flying and saw him run as they passed.

"He'll wire to Hitchin and have us there," said Smith. But he knew his roads. "Oh, will he?"

He took the right fork of the roads at Welwyn and roared through Stevenage to Baldock and found the main road again at Sandy. They reached Huntington, sixty miles from town, in an hour and three quarters.

"And I've never let her out but once," said Smith; "she's a daisy!"

The eighteen miles to Spilsborough they did at a speed that made Penelope bend her head. She felt wonderful: she was on a shooting-star. They slackened on the outskirts of the cathedral city and rolled through it delicately. She looked about her and remembered the dear bishop who had christened her when he was no more than a vicar.

"We'll go by Crowland and Spalding, Smith." A car followed them out of Spilsborough, and Smith, going easy, looked back and saw it.

"Catch us, my son," he said, contemptuously. But when they were well clear of town and he turned her loose, so to speak, Pen's nerve went, or it appeared to go.

"Don't go so fast, Smith," she commanded.

And Smith obeyed sorrowfully.

"They can't stand it," he said; "none of 'em

can stand it really. They let on they can, but it's no go. A few hot miles gives them the mulligrubs."

But nevertheless they were running over thirty miles an hour. The car behind crawled up to them.

"All I've got to do, my lady, is to ask her to shake 'em off, and away we go and leave 'em," he suggested.

"Oh, no, no," said Pen.

At Spalding the pursuer, if he were one, was not a hundred yards behind. But in the town Smith got ahead. He did not see Penelope trembling. Smith had taken a look at the one behind.

"There's power there," he said, savagely. "If he lets her out and my lady squeals, I'm passed!"

She did "squeal" the other side of Spalding, but not for herself. The other car had to stop.

"That's done 'em," said Smith; "they're in the ditch." He gained ten miles on them, and Penelope wept.

And just as they were coming into Boston at an easy gait, Smith turned and saw the other car coming up behind like a meteor, with the dust astern of her in a fume.

"That chap can drive after all," said Smith. "Won't you try to let me get away from him before we get to Spilsby, my lady?"

"I — I don't want to," said Pen.

And five miles outside of Spilsby the pursuing car drew up with them. Two indistinguishable monsters drove it, and through his glaring goggles Smith glared at them as they came alongside.

"Stop," said Penelope, suddenly. "Stop, Smith."

And the other car stopped too.

"I'll go on with the other car," said Penelope. She took her place by the most unrecognizable portent of the two, and disappeared in a sudden and terrific cloud of dust.

"Damned if I know who it is, even now," said Smith.

CHAPTER XI.

It was Friday when Penelope disappeared from London in a motor-car, and was carried off by a motor pirate, unknown to any one, because he wore a peak cap, a fur coat with the fur outside, and gigantic goggles, making him resemble a diver or a cuttlefish.

It was Monday when she returned to town in a motor-car with Geordie Smith. And all the way into town Geordie said:

"Blessed if I'd ha' thought it. I always reckoned it would have been one of the others. I lose money on this, but if I do, it warms the cockles of my heart to see my lady happy. Bless her sweet face, I wish she'd leave the blooming world alone and have a good time. I never set eyes on such an aggravatin' beautiful sweet lady for interferin' with men. Just as if the queen herself could alter our ways! Women always gas that they can or mean to, and they're just like hens with men for ducks."

If he had been a classical scholar he might have remembered Ariadne up to her knees in the sea, with her lover on the deep in a boat.

"When I saw who it was at Moat House," said Geordie, "you could have knocked me endwise with something less than a steel spanner. And that horse-whipping ass of a Bunting was equal took aback. For somehow we never spotted him as likely to make the non-stop run. Humph, humph!"

And he left Penelope at her house just in time for afternoon tea. As she lay on the sofa she handed a paper to Chloe Cadwallader, saying:

"I wish you would send out cards to all these people for Thursday night."

"That's very short notice, darling," said Chloe.

"They'll come," said Pen.

And when Chloe looked at the list she found it included only Pen's particular friends, her most bitter relations, and the whole of the "horde."

"I wonder —" said Chloe, and she wondered somewhat later with Ethel.

"Is it?" said Ethel.

"Can it be?" cried Chloe.

"It can't be," said Ethel.

"Who knows?" asked Chloe. "She is so plain and so simple and straightforward that there is no

certainty about anything she does. I understand the wicked and the weak, but Penelope — "

She threw up her hands, and presently wrote out the cards. And Penelope was trying "to a degree," as Chloe said all Monday and Tuesday and Wednesday. And on Thursday she sent for Bob, who came helter-skelter in a hansom.

"You'll stand by me, Bob," said Pen, clutching him.

Bob put his hands in his pockets and stood straddle-legs. He stared at her. What was hidden from the wisdom of Chloe was revealed to the simplicity of this boy.

"Pen," said Bob, solemnly, "I'll stick by you till death. But ain't you going to tell me who it is?"

"Who what is?" asked Pen, feebly.

"Him," said Bob. "Pen, you've been and gone and done it."

Pen, the strong and mighty Pen, wept a little.

"Don't snivel," said Bob. "It can't be helped now, I suppose, unless you get a divorce. Do you want one?"

"Oh, no!" said Pen. "Not at all!"

Bob considered the matter for a few minutes.

"I say, what makes you cry?" he asked.

"I — I don't know," said Penelope.

"Girls are very rum. Baker says they are. He's not married, you know. He says mules are easy to them. He drove mules once in India, he says. You know you are doing all this off your own bat, Pen, ain't you? Why don't you chuck it?"

"Chuck what, dear?"

"Oh, this notion of not letting on. Baker says it's the rummest start *he* ever knew, and he says he's seen some rum things in his life, especially when he was a sergeant in the Dublin Fusiliers. Can't you chuck it?"

"Oh, no, certainly not," said Pen, firmly. "It's only, Bob, that I'm not used to it yet, you see."

"Of course not," said Bob. "Being married is strange at first, I suppose. Baker says he knew a woman who was married four times, and by the fourth time she wasn't nervous to speak of. But is it true, Pen, that you won't tell any one who it is?"

"I won't," said Pen.

"Bravo," cried Bob. "Stick to it. Oh, it will make granny so savage! Has Bill spoken about it to you?"

"He laughs," said Pen. "He always does laugh."

"He tells rattling good stories," said Bob. "He told me a splendid one about a man who stole a

parrot the other day. I'll tell it you sometime when I remember it. Is anything going to happen to-night, Pen?"

Pen shivered.

"Oh, dear, I don't know. Mind you come, too, Bob."

Bob vowed he wouldn't miss coming for worlds.

"I believe you're thinking of telling 'em you've done it," he said, and Pen said she was thinking of telling them.

"You won't tell me who it is? I'm as close as wax," urged Bob.

"I can't, dear," said Pen.

"Oh, by Jove, I remember Bill's parrot story, Pen. A man stole a parrot, and when he was caught he said he took it for a lark. And the man who owned it said he'd make a bally fine judge at a bird-show."

"Oh," said Pen, rather blankly; "but if he only took it for a lark, I suppose they let him off. Did they?"

"Let him off what?"

"Why — going to prison, of course," said Pen.

"I don't know," replied Bob, staring. "Don't you see it's a joke?"

"Yes, I see, of course," said Pen. "Why, the

man said it was a lark, and it was a parrot. I think it's a very good story, Bob."

And Bob went away wondering whether it was or not.

"I'll tell it to Baker," he said, thoughtfully.

He turned up at nine o'clock that night with Titania, who was in a state of mind requiring instant attention from a physician.

"Good heavens, what is it, I wonder," said Titania. "Robert, I wonder what it is? But what do you know? I am in a tremble; I am sure she will do or say something even more scandalous than she has done yet. I put it all on Bradstock; to make him her guardian was a fatal error. My nerves — but I have none. I quiver like a jelly; I shake; I must be pale as a ghost. Why should we take so much trouble over anything? I must think of myself. I will go to bed and stay there for a week, and send for Dr. Lumsden Griff."

But Bradstock was as calm as a philosopher without anything in the objective world to worry him.

"What does it matter?" he inquired. "Does anything matter?"

Brading, whom no one had seen for many months, as he had spent the whole winter in a yacht down the Mediterranean, was perfectly good-humoured.

"You see, she's a dear, but only my half-sister

after all," he said to Bradstock, "and women are so wonderful! I can tell you a story by and by of a Greek lady, and one about a Spaniard. And, to tell the truth, I almost agree with Pen. I'm a bit of a socialist, or an anarchist, if you like. Have you read Nietzsche?"

"Who wrote it?" asked Bradstock.

But the horde came in one by one, and Penelope, who was dressed in the most unremarkable costume at her disposal, and looked like a lily, received them at the door.

"A most awful and improper situation," said Titania.

"I say, I'll tell you about that Greek girl," said Brading. "Do you think Pen could stick a knife in a fellow?"

Bradstock didn't think so, and listened to the story of the lady who suggested the notion.

"Right through my coat and waistcoat," said Brading. "Only a very stiff piece of starch saved my life!"

"Good heavens!" cried Bradstock.

The room was full, and Bob buzzed around it like a bluebottle in an orchard.

"Oh, I say," he cried to every one. He told the story of the parrot after he had asked Brading whether he had it right. He tried it on De Vere

and failed. Goby roared handsomely. Bramber was absent-minded with his eye on Penelope. Gordon said, "Yes, yes, a ripping good story." The Marquis de Rivaulx balked at it, but was led to understand it.

"And when can I go up in a balloon?" asked Bob. He waited for no answer, but told it to Williams, suggesting that the war correspondent might pay for it by a story with blood and torture in it, please. And all of a sudden it was noticed that the hostess had slipped out of the room.

"Where — where is Penelope?" asked trembling Titania. "Mrs. Cadwallader, where is Lady Penelope?"

Bob ran her to earth in her bedroom, and after many appeals he was let in.

"Oh, dear, oh, dear," said Penelope. "Bob, let me take hold of you. Do I tremble?"

"Rather," said Bob. "I'll bet you couldn't drink a glass of wine without spilling it. What's wrong? Buck up. Ain't you comin' in to tell 'em? I've broken it a bit for you."

Pen screamed.

"You wretched boy, what have you done?"

"Bless you, nothing to speak of," said Bob. "I only said you would make 'em sit up presently. They think I know something, and want to bribe

me. I say, Pen, if you say nothing for a few days, I believe old Gordon will make me a director. Can you? I want to make money and restore the family property. I say, do."

But Pen paid no attention to him. She groaned instead.

"Where's the pain?" asked Bob, anxiously. "Shall I get you some brandy?"

"No, no, Bob! I *must* go in and tell them."

"Come on, then," said Bob, eagerly. "I don't care about the directorship. They're all white and shaking. I *guess* they *are* in a stew."

But still Pen did not move, and when Chloe came she sent her away, saying, "In a moment, in a moment!"

Then Bob had a brilliant idea.

"I say, Pen, I'll do it!"

"Do what?"

"I'll go in and tell 'em you've done it. It would be a lark!"

But Pen shook her head.

"No, I must, I will be brave. If a woman has ideas she must live up to them. I have done good so far. Are they not very much improved, Bob?"

"Some, I think," said Bob, carelessly. "But I

dare say they'll go regular muckers now. Come on, Pen, I do want to see their jaws drop."

And Pen went with him. She stayed outside the door, and Bob went in first.

"She's coming," said Bob. And Pen entered with her eyes on the floor. Bob took her hand.

"Buck up and spit it out," he said, in an encouraging whisper, which was audible in the farthest corner of the room. Some of the horde turned pale; Titania fell back in her chair; Bradstock leant against the wall. Brading put up his eyeglass, and then told Bradstock Pen reminded him of a girl who had once tried to smother him with a pillow.

"She had Penelope's straightforwardness, and never gave in, just like Pen," said Brading, thoughtfully.

And now Penelope took hold of her courage, so to speak, and opened her mouth.

"S-sh," said Bob, who looked on himself as the master of the ceremonies, "s-sh, I say."

And he took hold of Pen's hand.

"I'm so glad to see you here to-night," said the reformer, "for I am so much interested in you all, you see. And you've all been so brave."

"Hear, hear," said Bob.

"So brave in different ways, about balloons and

motor-cars and curing yourselves of your weak points," went on Penelope. "That's what I hoped my influence would do. I said I was only a girl, but even a girl ought to do something, and I knew you all liked me very much, for you all said so, and I said, what can I do for you? And I did my best, and you did yours, I'm sure, for I've heard from every one of you all about the others."

This made many of them look rather queer, as no doubt it might.

"And months ago I said — I said — "

"Go ahead, Pen," whispered Bob. "You mean you said you'd marry one of 'em."

"I said I'd — marry one of you."

Titania groaned in the corner of a vast settee. Bradstock and Brading whistled, or it seemed so. But the other poor wretches stared at Penelope, and saw no one, heard no one, but her.

"And I wanted you to come to-night so that I could ask you all to go on in the path of rectitude and simplicity and courage, balloons and hard work and healthiness and thought for others, even if I was married," said Pen, with a gasp. "Will you, oh, will you?"

"We will," said the crowd, Goby leading with a deep bass voice and tears in his eyes.

"Oh, I'm so glad," said Penelope, "for I shall

not have lived in vain even if I died to-night. And now — and now — I have to tell you something."

"Great heavens," said Titania, in an awestricken and penetrating whisper, "what is she going to say now?"

"I have kept my word," said Penelope, with her eyes on the floor. "I have kept my word!"

"What — what word?" asked the collapsed duchess, and Pen tried to say what word she had kept.

"Speak up," said Bob, "speak up, Pen!"

And she did speak up.

"For — for," gasped Penelope, "for, you see, I *have* married one of you!"

Titania uttered a scream and promptly fainted. The men looked at each other furiously and suspiciously, while Pen was on her knees beside the poor duchess. At that moment a message was brought in for Gordon, and an urgent note from the whip for Bramber. Brading stood in a corner and whistled. Bradstock shrugged his shoulders, and Bob buzzed all over the room like a wasp in a bottle. By dint of water and smelling-salts and the slapping of hands Titania was brought to, and when she had recovered consciousness to the extent of knowing what it was that had bowled her over, she uttered words on the spur of the moment which

were almost as much of a bombshell as those Penelope had spoken.

"I don't believe she's married at all," said Titania.

CHAPTER XII.

To talk about the grounds of certainty is to talk metaphysically, and metaphysics being the highest form of nonsense, becomes sense in that altitude, as it must be if Hegel is to be believed. But in the conduct of life the grounds of certainty are an estate beyond the rainbow. If Penelope believed any one thing with more fervour than another, it was that her truthfulness must be self-evident. The course of events after the evening on which Titania fainted and recovered so sharply showed her that nothing was certain, not even self-evident truths. For though she said she was married, few, if any, believed her. Titania, who believed in her intuitions, as all right-minded women must, because reason is only an attribute of man, declared that Penelope had lied, to put it plainly. She invented an hypothesis to account for it.

"She found out she didn't want to marry any of them, and her courage to say so failed her. This notion of hers gives her time, and of course, my

dear, as you see from what I say, she's not married in the least."

Bradstock, who was a philosopher, disagreed with her, and agreed with Bob.

"Not married in the least, eh?" said Bradstock. "What is the least degree of marriage which would meet with your moral approval, Titania?"

"Don't talk nonsense, Augustin," replied Titania, tartly.

"I cannot help it," said Augustin, "the situation is so absurd."

And so it was for every one but the Duchess and Penelope, who did not understand a joke even with illustrations. And they undoubtedly had the illustrations. There were leading articles in several papers on the subject of marriage, with discreet allusions to Penelope's case. There was a long and rabid correspondence in the *Daily Turncoat,* a new halfpenny paper, to which every lady with a past or a future contributed. The editor of the *Dictator* wrote a moral essay with his own hand, obvious to every student of his immemorial style, which proved that another such case would knock the bottom out of the British Empire and bring on protection. He showed that marriage, open and unadulterated, in a chapel, at the least, was the minimum on which morality could exist, and he pointed

out with sad firmness that the ethical standards of the true Briton were the only decent ones at present unfurled in the universe, and that they were in great danger of being rolled up and put away. As every one knows, all he said was undoubtedly fact. The true Briton is the only moral person in the world. As a result Penelope felt that she wasn't a true Briton, and it made her very mournful, as it should have done. Nothing but her native obstinacy, which was imperial if not British, made her stick to her ideas, when her half-brother came to her and asked her crudely to "chuck" it. For, though he was humourous, it was past a joke now, and his admiration of Pen was tinged with alarm.

"I say, old girl, chuck it," said Bill.

"I can't! I won't!" said Penelope.

"Nobody believes you."

Penelope couldn't help that.

"I've spoken the truth."

"Why, even the other men don't believe it," said her brother. "Why, I met three of 'em to-day, and they all said, 'Oh, yes, we understand.' I say, Pen, this is too much. Chuck it!"

"Once for all, dear, I won't," said Penelope. "Much as I dislike this publicity, I see it is doing good. I get letters every day from scores of people saying that I am doing good. Three to-day de-

clared that they were following my example in a registrar's office, and three more are thinking of it. One lady writes, saying she hopes I would go in for abolishing marriage altogether when public opinion was prepared for the extinction of the race. I don't agree with her, but she was enthusiastic, and enthusiasm is a great thing."

"I shall go yachting for a year," said Bill.

"I wish you would, dear Bill," replied Penelope. "It will do you good. You look quite pale, and I don't like you to do that. Have you any cough?"

"Damn it, no," said Brading, crossly.

And he went yachting again without publicity but with a lady. He was no true Briton, and never read the *Dictator*.

His departure took one thing off Pen's hands, but none of her lovers departed. Titania's words had sunk deep in their minds.

"She's not married," they said. "And if she says she is, it is only to try us."

They all interviewed Bob, and made things very pleasant for that rising statesman. If he believed Pen was married there was no reason to say so openly.

"Am I old enough to be a director, do you think?" he asked Gordon. "What I want is to

make pots of money and rebuild Goring, which is a bally ruin."

"You don't answer my questions," said Gordon.

"Oh, about Pen," said Bob. "She's queer. I don't know, Mr. Gordon, I can't tell. She may be, for all I know. She's so clever, I don't know that she hasn't married you, and put you up to coming and asking me questions."

Gordon couldn't help grinning.

"I think you'll be a director of something some day," said he. "I can't make you one now, but if you have a hundred pounds I'll invest it in something for you, my son, that will make your hair curl."

"Like yours?" asked Bob, curiously, and Gordon flinched.

"Well," went on Bob, without waiting for an answer, "I haven't a hundred pounds, but I've an idea how to get it."

"Yes?" said the financier. "What's your idea, Bob?"

"It's a safe and a certain investment, is it?"

"Why, of course," replied Gordon.

"Then I'll tell you what, you lend it me," said Bob, brightly, "and invest it for me."

"Damned if I don't," cried Gordon. "Bob, when you are twenty-one I'll make you a director and ask

your advice! And you'll come and tell me if you find out anything about Lady Penelope?"

Bob looked at him and shook his head.

"I say, you're so clever, I don't know how to take you. I dare say it's you!"

The flattered financier smiled.

"Oh, by the way," said Bob, rather in a hurry, "I suppose I should get nearly as much if I invested ninety pounds as if I put in a hundred?"

"Nearly," said Gordon, who hoped to be let off a little, "only ten per cent. less."

"That'll do me," said Bob. "Then you can give me the tenner now, Mr. Gordon, and put in the rest for me."

"I wish I had a boy like that," said Gordon. He went away ten pounds poorer, but with a great admiration for Bob, who was determined to restore the faded splendour of Goring.

"Hanged if I know who it is," said Bob. "It may be Gordon after all. And every one but De Vere and Bramber have been at me. Is it one of these?"

He had a remarkable list of all those who had pretended to Penelope's hand, for he was very curious, like all the rest of the world. He was also a little sore with Pen for not confiding in him.

"I told her I'd find out," he said, "and I will."

This was his list, and a curious document it was, written in a big, round hand that "old Guth" could never get him to modify. His spelling was almost ducal in its splendour.

"*Plant.* It isn't Mr. Plant, because he said would I like to go out in a motor, a new one, ninety-horse power, and I said rather, if he'd let her rip. And he looked anshious I thought. He tiped me.

"*Goby.* It isn't Goby, Goby says he'll always be my friend. He said had I another pony not sound, to experiment with. He stamped up and down, some. He tiped me.

"*Williams.* It isn't Williams, he took me to lunch and told me lots of things about the Chinese that his paper wouldn't print. They were orful. He said if I'd keep in with him he knew worse. He didn't tip me this time because the lunch was so much. I had turtell three times.

"*Rivaulx.* It isn't the Frenchy because he tore his hair, and said I could go up in a baloon any day. At least, he didn't tear his hair; it's too short. He keeps it up with Gordon too but looks horrid. He tiped me.

"*Carew.* It isn't him. He's very anxshus and says he can't paint: says the crittics are right. He was a sad sight to see, walking around in his studio.

He said would I sit to him for an angel. He stops walking and tries to do Pen quick. I think it's muck. I wouldn't like a tip from him, for if an artist can't paint through grief what becomes of him? Do the others buy him for the Chantrey Bequest?"

"That's the lot so far," said Bob. And he added to his notes:

"*Gordon.* It isn't Gordon. He lent me a hundred pounds to invest in something to make hair curl. I said make it ninety and give me ten now, and he did. He didn't tip me, but I don't think him mean on that account."

"That leaves only De Vere and Bramber," said Bob, "and she never seemed much stuck on either to my mind. But if they don't say anything to me I shall begin to suspect."

He said so to Bradstock, who called him a young devil.

But about three days later Bob added to his notes:

"*Bramber.* It isn't Bramber. I met him in the park. He took me to the House and gave me a beastly lunch. But he didn't notice it as he couldn't

eat and looked very pale and savidge. He tiped me.

"*De Vere.* It's not the poetry rotter. He wants me to stay with him and look after the dogs. He said if I had a sick one he'd rather have it than not. He said he was desprit. I don't know why, but suppose it's Pen. He tiped me."

"Now where am I at?" he said, blankly. "I've written down it isn't any of 'em. And that's what granny says. But I don't believe her."

He chewed his pencil till it was in rags, and then a sudden idea struck him.

"I'll buy all Sherlock Holmes and read him right through," said Bob. "That's the way to find out anything. I wish I knew the man that wrote him. I wonder if De Vere knows him? I'll ask Baker to get a sick dog from the vet's, and I'll go down and stay with De Vere if I can make granny say 'yes.' I wonder why old De Vere wants a sick dog, though. I can't understand poets."

It was no wonder Gordon wished he had a boy like Bob.

CHAPTER XIII.

It was all very well for Bob to declare that his grandmother was altogether "off it" when she said that Penelope wasn't married at all. For, little by little, after furious discussions in ten thousand houses, in the court, the camp, and the grove, that came to be the general opinion.

Titania expressed the general opinion:

"She is mad, of course. What can one expect when her mother was an American? All Americans are mad. Bradstock assures me there is a something in the air of the United States (oh, even in Canada) which makes one take entirely new views of everything. And that, of course, is madness, my dear, madness undoubted and dangerous. He assured me, poor fellow, that six months in that absurd country made him tremble for his belief in a constitutional monarchy! He adds that he has only partially recovered, by firmly fixing his eyes on what a limited monarch might be, if he tried. Yes, she was an American, and adored our aris-

tocracy, not knowing what we are, poor thing. And yet where Penelope's ideas come from I do not know. I firmly believe Bradstock is the cause of them. When she was a little girl he would take her on his knee and pour anarchism into her innocent ears. You know his way; he runs counter to everything, though now comparatively silent. And Penelope was always ready to go against me, though she loves me. This was an early idea of hers; Augustin owns that he suggested it humourously to her years ago. There is nothing so dangerous as humour; it is always liable to be taken seriously. Mr. Browning, the poet, said so to me at a garden-party; he said he was a humourist, and he said Mr. Tennyson (oh, yes, Lord Tennyson) lacked humour, while he himself had too much of it. He explained Sordello to me, and made me laugh heartily. But as I was saying, Penelope took up the idea and gave it out, and now is sorry, and, not having the courage to say so, she has taken refuge in what I am reluctantly compelled to characterize as a lie, and it is a great relief to me. The scandal will blow over; already the halfpenny papers are tired of her. I expect she will marry by and by. Oh, no, of course she isn't married!"

And as Penelope's ideas were in every way absolutely contrary to what one has a right to expect,

it is only natural that, proof of the contrary being lacking, the whole world began gradually to come around to Titania's opinion. A duchess has a great deal of influence if she only likes to use it, and the public is no more proof against her than the public offices are.

And Pen set her teeth together and ignored every one, and had very little to say to society. Her apparent passion was for motor-cars, and she went out in the sixty-horse Panhard almost every day. And every end of the week she disappeared, coming back on Monday or Tuesday.

"I could tell 'em something," said Geordie Smith, "couldn't I, old girl?"

The "old girl" he referred to was the machine he loved next best, at least, to Lady Penelope.

"Me and Bunting could wake 'em up some," he said. "I'd like Bunting if he'd only get rid of the notion that horses are everything. I hope to see the time when there won't be any except in parks, running wild like deer."

It was an awful notion, and it was a wonder that he and Bunting got on without fighting.

"My lady *uses* your bloomin' tracking engine," said Tim, contemptuously, "but she *loves* 'orses. You can't give carrots to your old thing, and it ain't got no smooth and silky muzzle to pat. Faugh!

the smell of it makes me sick; give me the 'ealthy hodour of the stable, Smith!"

"Find me a horse that'd carry her and me a hundred and twenty miles in three hours and damn the expense in fines," replied Smith, "and I'm with you. My lady loves this car a'most as much as I do. Who can catch her and me, flying along? Let 'em come, let 'em try, and I'll put her out to the top notch and let her sizzle. You come out and try, Tim; one drive and you'll be another man, looking on horses as what they are, mere animals and not up to date. My lady's up to date and beyond it."

"When I go in your bally machine hit'll be by my lady's horders," said Timothy, "and it'll be tryin' my hallegiance very 'ard. Come and 'ave a drink, if you hain't too advanced for that! 'Ave you been chased lately as you brought my lady 'ome?"

"I thought I was," replied Smith, "but I shook 'em off. I'm egging her on to get a ninety-horse in case. That young cousin of hers let on to me that she'll be followed up some day, and I told her. She'll do it!"

"I wonder what's her game?" said Tim. "Blowed if I hunderstand."

"So far's I see," replied Smith, "it's a general notion that a party's private biz is their private

biz. And the others says it isn't, and there's where the trouble begins. I agree with her in a measure, don't you?"

"I agrees with my lady hevery time," said Tim. "She's a sweet lady, and, my word, if I didn't I'd get the sack, which I don't want. What she says she sticks to, bein' in that different to hany woman I hever met. That's what the trouble is, that and reformin' lovers and husbands and law and so hon!"

But the real trouble was that what she said she stuck to. She began to care much less for reform, and now never read Herbert Spencer and the greater philosopher, who has discovered that man doesn't think so much of yesterday as he does of to-morrow. She forgot the Deceased Wife's Sister, and ignored the London County Council, and didn't read the *Times* except on great occasions. She spent the days in dreaming, and, except when she was devouring the space between London and Lincolnshire, she lay about on sofas and read poetry or listened to Bob, and looked ten thousand times more beautiful than ever, like the Eastern beauties, of whom one reads in the Arabian Nights, returning from the bath. She was wonderfully affectionate to Bob, who was a most considerate boy, and didn't worry her when he had once discovered that asking questions was no use. He told her of his vain efforts

to find out whom she had married, and was very amusing. He began to have great ambitions.

"Mr. Gordon says I've a great future before me, Pen. He thinks no end of me. He says being a duke by and by is all very well, but I agree with him there are greater things than merely being one. He says the men with power are the rulers of the world. He told me how he and Rothschild stopped a war in a hurry. He didn't say which war. I asked him why he didn't stop the South African War, and he said that was different. I asked him did he bring it on then, and he said 'No.' But I think he did, somehow. Will you ask old Sir Henry if he did? I don't like Sir Henry, though, do you?"

He went on to tell her about Sherlock Holmes.

"I'm reading him through again, Pen. And when I go down to De Vere's I shall ask De Vere to invite the man that wrote him. I'm going to De Vere's to take him a sick dog. He said he wanted one, and I've got one from Baker. Baker says he must want to vivisect him, and he doesn't like the idea. Baker's a very kind man to animals, but I've given my word that the dog sha'n't be vivisected. You don't think a poet would, do you? Did you tell him to learn to be a vet or anything? If you did, that would explain it. I've been through the whole list, Pen, and, though I won't worry you,

I've come to the conclusion so far that I don't know which you've married. If I find out I won't tell."

"You're a dear," said Pen, languidly.

"I've got a notion how to find out, though," said Bob. "At least, I shall have when I've finished Sherlock Holmes. I'd rather be Sherlock Holmes than a duke. It seems to me that unless you are the Duke of Norfolk or the Duke of Devonshire you are out of it. Being a common duke is dull, but being Holmes must be very exciting."

One thing that he told her made her think furiously.

"Not one of 'em really believes you, Pen, and they're much more jealous of each other than they were. I believe they'll be fighting presently."

"Don't talk nonsense," said Pen, anxiously.

Bob shrugged his shoulders, a trick he had caught from the marquis.

"It's not nonsense. I can see bloodshed in their eyes. The marquis looks awfully ferocious, and Williams, too. Of course, I don't say that Gordon would fight much. And I should snigger to see old De Vere in a duel, shouldn't you? But if Bramber and the marquis and Williams and Goby get together, I shouldn't be surprised if they fought with swords or guns. I think Rivaulx would like that. He would stick them all and make 'em squeal, I

can tell you. He's a whale at fencing. He took me to see him once, and when he stamped and said 'Ha-ha,' like a war-horse, I wondered the other man didn't run."

"If they had a duel, any of them, I shouldn't speak to them again," said Penelope. "I abhor duels and warfare and weapons, and think they should be abolished in universal peace. And as I am married now, Bob, I hope you will do what you can to make them believe it."

"You can make 'em believe it at once," said Bob. "I do think this is absurd. And don't you see it's funny, too, Pen?"

"No," said Pen, "it's not. It's right, and what is right can't be funny."

Bob reflected.

"Well, there's something in that. It ain't much fun generally."

And he returned to Sherlock Holmes.

"I wonder what he would do," said Bob to himself, pensively. "There ain't any footsteps or blood in this. I suppose he'd take a look at Pen and then have a smoke and go out in a hansom and come back very tired. I've looked at Pen a lot, but smoking still makes me sick, and I don't know where to go in a hansom. And I think Holmes would think it mean to follow her when she goes off with

Smith in her car. Besides, a hansom can't catch a sixty-horse Panhard unless it breaks down. I think he would get at it by looking at the men."

That put him on the track of a dreadful scheme, a most wicked and immoral scheme, that his hero would have disapproved of.

"I believe I have it," said Bob, starting up in wild excitement. "If I go around to them all and say that I'm sure she's not married, but that she loves the one they hate most, they will jump and be in a rage, won't they? I should be, I know. And the one that doesn't jump will be him. I dare say De Vere won't jump, but he's not a jumping sort, but he'll cry, likely. Rivaulx *will* snort if it isn't him."

He sat and pondered over this lovely scheme.

"But if she loves one of 'em, why don't she own it to him, and why this mystery? They'll ask that, of course. Oh, but that doesn't matter; they'll do the snorting first. And, besides, I could let on that not all of them are in earnest. Ain't it possible that the one she loves won't ask her now, and she's covering up her disappointment? That would make Rivaulx fairly howl, I know. He's a real good chap, and between howling and weeping he says he wants her to be happy. I'll do it."

He went off to do it at once.

"Ha, ha, my beautiful boy," said the Marquis of Rivaulx, whom he found in his rooms in Piccadilly, "have you come with news for me, the devoted and despairing?"

"Well, I don't know, marquis," returned Bob, soberly. "I've been thinking about it, and I'm in a state of puzzle."

"And I am in a state of the devil himself," replied Rivaulx. "I suspect every one. I am enraged. I suspect you, Bob, my boy."

Bob shook his head.

"I suspect you, too. I've never got over thinking that it may be you," he said, "for you are all just like each other, and it's obvious some one is telling me lies."

Rivaulx smiled, a deep and dark French smile, which was agonizing to behold. It puzzled Bob dreadfully.

"There," he said, "you smile, and so does Pen, and you all smile. But I believe I've discovered something."

"About who or which?" asked Rivaulx. "Is it about that Goby?"

He might loathe Gordon, but he was jealous of Goby. He promenaded the room, and was already in a rage.

"Yes," said Bob, boldly. "I believe she's not married, and I believe she likes him best."

"The hound, the vile one, the unmeasured beast," roared Rivaulx, "it cannot be. If she loves him (no, I can't believe it), why does she not wed him? I shall slay him. Is she unhappy? Does she weep? I adore her, but if she loves him he shall marry her or I will stab him to the heart."

"I dare say he's not in earnest," said Bob. And the marquis ground his teeth and foamed at the mouth, and again tried to tear his close-cropped hair without the least success.

"Not — oh, sacred dog of a man, — ha — let me kill him!"

He tore around the room and knocked two ornaments off the mantelpiece and upset a table, which Bob laboriously restored to its place. After he had put it back three times, he gave it up and cowered under the storm.

"I shouldn't be surprised if this was put on," said Bob, rather gloomily. "I know he can act like blazes; Pen says he can. She said he was finer than Irving or Toole in a tragedy. I don't think it has the true ring of sincerity."

And making his escape from the cyclone, he went off to see Goby, who was hideously jealous of Carteret Williams.

"I hope he won't be as mad as the marquis," said Bob. "That table barked my shins horribly the last time it fell. I wish Frenchmen wouldn't shout so when they're angry; I'm nearly deaf."

There was the devil to pay with Goby. He announced his intention of assaulting Williams at once.

"Oh, I say, you mustn't," cried Bob, in great alarm. "She'll never forgive you."

"That Williams!" said Goby. "I always did hate war correspondents. I don't believe it."

But it looked as if he did.

"I dare say you are putting it on," cried Bob. "I don't know where I am."

Goby said he didn't, either, but that if this turned out to be true he would wring Williams's neck in the park the first fine Sunday in June.

"He would have acted just the same if he was married to her, and thought she loved Williams best after all," said Bob to himself. "I'll try Bramber and Williams, and then give it up."

Bramber was in a furious temper, and when Bob assured him that Penelope loved Gordon best of any one, he swore horribly. As he rarely swore, this was very impressive, and Bob almost shivered.

"I say, you mustn't kick Gordon," he urged. "After all, I may be mistaken."

"I wish you were dead," said Bramber, "and you will be if you don't get out."

Bob got out, and when he was in the open air he sighed.

"I don't think I'll try Williams," he said, thoughtfully. "He's much bigger and stronger even than Goby, and they say he's a terror when he's very angry. My scheme doesn't seem to work; there's something wrong with it."

But there was nothing wrong with it, and it worked marvellously. The report that Bob said positively that Pen wasn't married carried much weight. Goby and Rivaulx both gave it away. And all the men now loathed each other openly. Rivaulx cut Goby and Goby cut Williams and Bramber sneered at Gordon, and there was great likelihood of there being the devil to pay. Pen tried to patch up peace among them, and failed, and wept about it, seeing so much of the good she had done melt like sugar in warm rain. At last she announced her intention of leaving them and the world alone.

"I almost think I'll give up reform," she sighed.

And the season went by and the autumn came, and Titania found herself at Goring in October with a large house-party which didn't include Penelope.

"She is, of course, somewhat ashamed of her-

self," said Titania, happily. "This comes of having ideas and foolishly attempting to carry them into practice. Now that I am certain she is not married and that she only says so, I feel quite different. I no longer abhor the poor, foolish men who are so much in love with her. I see plainly (for I, too, am naturally a democrat of the proper kind) that they have fine qualities. I have marked my sense of this in a way which appears to amuse Lord Bradstock for some reason that I do not follow, — but then, I never could follow Augustin, poor fellow, — by asking them all down here. I dare say they think Penelope will come, for they have all accepted. I am delighted, for I really admire them. Mr. Carew is the handsomest young man in London, and will paint my portrait between meals. I wonder whether I shall try to get thinner by eating less, or will it be better to tell Mr. Carew to make me thinner in his picture. That seems the easiest course; for if Penelope's conduct has not made me thin, what would? Neither hot weather nor despair has the least effect upon me. I shall trust to Mr. Carew's idea of what is right and proper. I wish I could rely with equal confidence upon poor, dear, misguided Penelope."

There was much discontent in the camp when the lovers learnt that their beloved was not one of

Titania's house-party. They were not civil to each other, and with difficulty were civil to Titania.

"Confound the old harridan," said Goby. This was wicked, for Titania was very sweet, and retained much more than a trace of her youthful beauty. She belonged to the modern band of those who sternly refuse to grow old.

"Great Scott!" said Carteret Williams. The others made equally appropriate exclamations. They damned Goring in heaps, and looked at each other like a crowd of strange dogs. Owing to Penelope's influence they all came in motor-cars. Even De Vere turned up in one which was guaranteed by age and its maker not to go more than ten miles an hour. There wasn't room to get them into the temporary garage out of the wet. But the marquis did not come in a balloon or a flying-machine. That was something, at any rate, though Bob growled about it bitterly. Pen's request that he should do his best to make the world believe she was married was entirely forgotten. Without quite meaning to say so, he practically asserted in every word that she was not.

"After all," said Bob, "I believe she is capable of deceiving even me, for she is a woman. Horace, in his Odes, seems to think that. It seems to me

that classical authors had a very poor opinion of women."

He went to Rivaulx crossly.

"I say, I think you ought to have come in a flying-machine. Why didn't you? Pen will be mad."

He introduced De Vere to Baker (who had been a sergeant in the Dublin Fusiliers), and left him with him, discussing hydrophobia and bulldogs.

"Baker says he has a great admiration for you, sir," said Bob. "He has lots of pups for you to look at. There's a very queer spotted one that Pen said she was sure you would like. It's very cheap for a spotted dog of the kind, Baker says."

But they were an unhappy crowd, and even the shooting, which was fairly good for a poor duke's place, hardly consoled them.

At night the women, who all gambled, naturally were very cross. It appeared that not one of the men would play bridge, because Penelope had made them swear off. There were only three men in the house not in love with Penelope. Titania had a dreadful time, and much regretted her hospitality. Carew was furious, of course, and his notions of colour were very morbid. And he appeared to see the duchess as she was, in spite of the hints the poor woman threw out to the desperate painter,

who looked at her sorrowfully and sighed as he shook his head.

"Being painted is an ordeal," she said. Not one of the others consoled her. De Vere wept with her in the drawing-room; Williams wrecked her orchids in the hothouse; Plant and Gordon quarrelled in the smoking-room. And Bramber, who was only there for four days, looked horridly sorry for himself, and sneered at every one. The marquis went around the park in a ninety-horse-power racer seventeen times between breakfast and lunch. The chauffeurs quarrelled furiously; they even fought in the stable yard with Baker as umpire and Bob as timekeeper.

At the dinner-table was the only time of peace, and then it was too peaceful. Nobody but Bob and Ethel Mytton and Titania did any talking. Bob spoke of very little but Penelope, which was natural but awkward. He told them what Baker said, till they all desired to go out and strangle Baker. Bradstock encouraged him, for Bradstock was the only man there who had any apparent desire to be amused. The rest of them played with the soup, toyed with the *entrées,* fooled with the roasts, choked over the birds, and went out and oversmoked themselves. Then they met in the big hall and the drawing-room, and Titania had to assure them all

one after the other, that she was certain Penelope was not married.

"Then why does she say she is?" they asked, bitterly.

"It must be to try you," said Titania. "Augustin, don't you think it is to try them?"

Bradstock made that sound which the English write as "Humph" and the Scotch put down as "Imphm." It means a great deal, but is intelligible to the intelligent.

"Yes, it is to try you," said Titania. "She is a dear, sweet thing, but has ideas which do not commend themselves to me. I understand them, of course, but regret them. It may be, of course, that she does not love any of you, and is trying to get out of it. By and by you will find out if that is so. She is enthusiastic and impulsive. Oh, these impulses of youth! How well I remember the delightful impulses of youth, when one feels as if one could fly with wings! Even now I get impulses. Poor Penelope! Ah, dear, I wish she would come. I have written again and again to ask her, but I'm afraid she will not."

And, indeed, no one at that moment knew where she was, unless, indeed, it was Timothy and Geordie Smith and Miss Mackarness and the pirate in goggles of the motor-car who carried her off.

Titania and Bob between them, at any rate, accomplished one thing. No one pretended to assign a satisfactory reason for Pen's conduct, but every one, except one, perhaps, believed she was still single. They were sure of it, and grew surer every day. As a result, they recovered some little peace of mind; they quarrelled less and ate more and shot straighter. Rivaulx only went fifteen times around the park before lunch; De Vere bought more dogs; Plant agreed to go into some scheme of trust robbery with Gordon, who assured the rest of them that he had Rothschild up his sleeve. Williams stamped less on flower-beds and swore half as much as usual. Goby and Bramber went out walks together with Bob and Ethel Mytton. Titania's barometer went up and her size went down in Carew's picture. He saw her less yellow, and did not insist on her wrinkles. Augustin sat in the library and read books which were of so humourous a character that they compelled him to put them down and laugh continually. It was certainly a most amusing house-party.

"I thought there would have been duels in the park," said Augustin. "I wonder what the deuce Pen would think of them if she saw them now."

And then one day something serious happened. It was on a Sunday, and on Sundays the post came in at half-past ten, just at the time they were all

having breakfast before going to church. They were just about as happy as they could ever hope to be till Penelope married one or all of them. Bob, who was especially greedy that morning, was eating against time and winning. Only Ethel was sad, for Goby seemed quite cheerful. When he was mournful she was happier always. Titania flowed wonderfully. Augustin was saying the kind of thing he could say when sitting down. Goring himself was eating as if he was in rivalry with Bob. He never said anything, but looked like a duke, which is a very fine thing when a man is a duke, and can afford it with care. Gordon was eating bacon as if he had no great appetite for it.

"Oh, here's the post," said Titania. Augustin took Saturday's *Times* and opened it.

"I wonder whether dear Penelope has written to me," said Titania. The "horde" looked up; they hoped even yet that Penelope would give in and come at last.

"Any news?" grunted Goring.

"I don't see any," replied Augustin.

"What are Jack Sheppard's United?" asked Gordon, slipping a piece of bacon into his pocket.

And Augustin made his celebrated speech over again, his single speech in the House of Lords.

"Good God!" said Augustin, and he turned al-

most as white as the *Times* paper before it went through the machines. Every one stared at him.

"What is it?" screamed Titania. Bob jumped up and deserted a pig's cheek just as it was showing signs of utter defeat.

"It's — it's —" said Augustin, and he stammered vainly.

"I say, let's look," cried Bob. "Granny, it's something in the Births, Marriages, and Deaths!"

"Good heavens, speak, Augustin!" implored Titania.

The band of lovers went as white as Augustin; they stood up simultaneously.

"I see it, I see it," said Bob, and he actually snatched the paper from Lord Bradstock's hand.

"Is she married? Is she dead?" asked Titania.

"No, no," said Bob, sputtering and aflame with wild excitement; "it's 'Brading — Lady Penelope Brading on the 18th of a son!'"

CHAPTER XIV.

THERE are blows which stun; this was, of course, one of them. Titania did not shriek or faint at the awful intelligence conveyed by the Thunderer of Printing House Square. She nodded her head as if she was partially paralyzed, and at last murmured in a dry whisper:

"Of a son! Of a son!"

Bradstock's eyebrows were as high as they would go, and he stared at Titania, and then look around on the circle of men and women. Ethel squeaked a little squeak, like a mouse behind the wainscot and was silent.

"Oh — of a son," said Goby, sighing and looking at the floor.

"Of a son!" said Plant, eyeing the ceiling.

"*Un fils!*" shrieked Rivaulx.

Gordon said "Damnation;" De Vere shook like a stranded jelly-fish; Bramber went as scarlet as a lobster, and then as white as cotton; Carteret

Williams looked blue, and Carew looked green, and Bob said: "My eye!"

There is something organic in any given number of people acting under the same shock or the same impulse. What one thinks another thinks; and now all the room fixed their eyes on Titania, whose lips moved in silence.

"This is dreadful!" said Titania to herself. "I don't believe she's married at all. One of these men is a scoundrel, a ruffian, a seducer!"

No one heard what she said, but as she thought it the men looked at each other with awful suspicions. And then Titania, whose mind was whirling, said feebly:

"We — we must hush it up!"

And there lay the *Times!* Hush it up indeed! And Bradstock recovered some of his equanimity.

"Nonsense! She's married, as she says," he remarked, with comparative coolness.

But no one believed it. The men drew apart from each other. De Vere moved his chair, because Goby was looking at him like a demon. Carew shrank from Carteret Williams. Gordon went livid under Plant's eyes. Bramber looked at them all as if he would die on the spot. Rivaulx rose up and waltzed around the room. It was a happy chance that he did so; it is possible that

he saved immediate bloodshed. Bradstock and Bob caught the Frenchman in their arms, and led him outside to the lawn, where there was ample room for a frantic *pas seul.*

"Steady, old chap!" said Bradstock, "steady! Her husband *must* acknowledge now who he is!"

"Oh, no," said Bob, in immense delight, "not much! If she's married at all, she's sworn him not to. She told me she'd swear him not to! And she said if he broke his oath she'd never see him again!"

"Great heavens!" said Bradstock, "so she did. I remember now, she *did* speak of oaths, dreadful oaths!"

Rivaulx danced over a flower-bed, came in contact with a fence, fell over it, and uttered a howl which brought every one into the garden. He tumbled into a ditch, fortunately a comparatively dry one, and lay there, using the very worst French language.

The gloomy crowd lined the ditch and listened, and wished they understood. As a matter of fact, only Bradstock and Bramber knew sufficient decent French to guess what Rivaulx said, and they shivered. In the background Titania and Ethel hung to each other and wept; old Goring remained inside sucking at an unlighted cigar.

"The terrible, terrible disgrace!" said Titania. She believed the very worst at once. "Is it the marquis? Is he smitten with remorse?"

Rivaulx got out of the ditch on the wrong side, and walked out into the park, where he addressed a commination service to a nice little herd of Jersey cows. After five minutes of this exercise, he returned toward the house and climbed the fence. Then he shook his fist at the others.

"One of you is a *scélerat,*" he howled, "a scoundrrrel! I challenge you all to fight! Ha, ha!"

Bradstock took him by the arm and led him away.

"One of us is a hound!" said Goby.

"Yes," said the others, "yes!"

They glared at each other horribly, and clenched their fists. Bob ran around them in the wildest excitement.

"Look here, I say, Captain Goby. Oh, Mr. de Vere! I say, Mr. Plant, if you want to fight, come into the stables. Granny says you mustn't fight here."

He grabbed several of them, and was hurled into space at once. He finally laid hold of De Vere, who wasn't capable of hurling a ladybird off his finger.

"You shall fight Goby if you want to," he roared.

THE MARQUIS DE RIVAULX
Anti-Semite to his manicured finger-tips

"But I don't want to," shrieked the poet. "What shall I do? My heart is broken!"

"Oh, what rot!" said Bob. "I don't understand what the row is about. Pen said she married, and she's got a kid. It will make her happy, for she always loved kids."

But then the notice in her maiden name! Was it not awful, horrible, brazen, peculiar, anti-social, against all law? It was wicked, immoral, indecent. Behind it there must be a dreadful story.

"By God!" said Bradstock, speaking at large to all but Rivaulx, who was breaking up a cane chair at a short distance, "I *do* think, oaths or none, that the man who is married to her should tell the duchess in confidence."

But Rivaulx heard in the intervals of destruction, and stayed his hand.

"Ha, ha!" he said aloud, "I love her! I am a man! I love her! What shall I do?"

He threw the fragments of the chair into a fountain, kicked over a flower-pot, and ran again into the park, taking the fence in his stride.

"I believe it's remorse," said Titania. "I begin to suspect the marquis!"

But everybody suspected everybody, and yet at the very height of their rage what Bradstock said sank into their hearts. Pen had selected them with

care for their inherent nobility. They said to themselves that they would show how noble they were. With one accord they straightened themselves up, and an air of desperate resolve was upon every man's face.

"I will think it out and make up my mind this afternoon," said each of them. They walked away in different directions, and in five minutes not one of them was in sight but the marquis, who was knocking his head against a sapling in a way that caused the herd of Jerseys to revise their estimate of humanity. Even he gave up at last, and went off into the distance with great strides.

"I say," said Bob, "I don't know what to make of this. Where are they going, and what are they going to do? I wish I knew where Pen is; I'd send her a telegram."

The rest of the party said nothing. Titania wept. Old Goring asked Bradstock for a light, and at last got his cigar going. He said nothing whatsoever. Ethel Mytton was in a fearful state of nervousness, and shook with it. Bradstock walked up and down whistling. The men who were not in it gathered in the billiard-room, and said they thought they had better have urgent calls to town. They wanted to discuss the scandal in their clubs. They knew that there wasn't a house in England that would

not consider their presence in the light of a tremendous favour, considering all that had occurred at Goring while they were there. They went, and regretted it afterward, for much occurred that very afternoon that no man could have foreseen.

Not a soul came in to lunch but Bob and Bradstock and the old duke.

"Augustin, my boy," said Goring, "these are surprising events, very surprising events. I thought I understood something about women, but I find I'm as ignorant as a two-year-old. What the devil does Penelope mean?"

Bob intervened.

"I believe, grandfather, that she wants to make you all sit up," he said, eagerly.

"Shut up, Bob," said the duke. "Eat pie and hold your tongue. Augustin, is she married, or isn't she?"

"I'm sure of it," said Bradstock, "but —"

"I think it's a damn silly business," said the duke. "I can't remember any parallel except when Miss Wimple, who was a devilish pretty girl fifty years ago, married Prince Scharfskopf morganatically, and kept it dark in spite of twins. There was a devil of a fuss, but it was kept quiet, no announcements in papers, and so on. The emperor boxed Scharfskopf's ears in court when it came

out, for it upset his diplomatic apple-cart, as Scharfskopf was to have married Princess Hedwig of Wigstein. She was virtuous and particular, and made trouble, being thirty-five. Do you think Penelope has married any damn prince, for instance?"

Bradstock didn't think so.

"Was any prince sneaking about, eh?"

"Oh, I say," cried Bob, who was listening eagerly, "there was the Rajah of Jugpore!"

"Good heavens!" said Goring, "so there was. I say, Bradstock, what have you to say to that? I'd like to have a look at the infant. Damme, it's a wonderful world!"

And this bore its fruit afterward in scandal and conjecture, for Bob threw out hints about it. But in the meantime they could only talk, and presently they saw the marquis coming across the lawn. He kept on stopping and looking up at the sky, as if for help or a balloon, and he smote his breast repeatedly in a very peculiar fashion.

"Queer cuss, Rivaulx," said Goring. "Takes it hard. Give me a light, Bob. Look at the Johnny smiting himself in the chest. What's he thinking of now? Looks as if he was bound upon a desperate deed. Dear me, I hope there will be no bloodshed, Bradstock! I'm too old for bloodshed

now. I won't have duels in the immediate neighbourhood of the house, Bradstock, mind that."

"All right," said Augustin, still looking at Rivaulx gesticulating violently in front of a large laurestinus. "Bob, give me those glasses."

Through the glass Rivaulx's face was plain to see.

"Damn!" said Augustin to himself, "what's up? He's going to do something, something desperate. He is looking like a hero on a scaffold. He has an air of sad nobility. Oh, Pen, Pen!"

Rivaulx advanced on the house with his head up. He came in and sent word to the collapsed duchess that he desired most humbly an audience with her. Bob listened.

"He wanted to see granny," said Bob.

"Let him," said the duke. "I don't; I want peace."

Titania sent down word that she would see him.

"Poor sad Penelope, poor mournful Penelope!" said Rivaulx. "Ha, but I will save her from further woe!"

He found Titania on a sofa, and he kissed her hand. This pleased poor Titania; it reminded her of her youth.

"Oh, marquis, I am in despair!" she cried.

"Despair not," said Rivaulx, as he stood up

and smote his forehead, "despair not. All is not lost. But for me, I stand between two dreadful alternatives, and I have resolved to do my duty."

There was an air of tragedy about him that covered him like a robe. Titania shivered.

"What is it? What have you to tell me?"

"Ah, what!" cried Rivaulx. "But I shall do it. I shall do it at once, immediately, if not sooner, as your poet says."

"You won't kill any one, at least not here," shrieked Titania.

"Far from it," replied the marquis. "Oh, but it is terrible, for I have to smash, to break an oath. I swore not to reveal what I am about to reveal."

"Good heavens!" said Titania. "Oh, what? Is it — can it be — no — "

"Yes, yes," cried Rivaulx, "it is true; I own it!"

"Own what, marquis?"

He smote his breast and looked above her.

"I am the man!"

"Oh, what man?" squealed the duchess.

"I am the husband — and — and — the father," said Rivaulx, with a gulp, as if he were swallowing an apple whole.

"Of my Penelope?"

"Yes, yes," said the marquis. "Say nothing.

It is a secret, full of oaths. Why, I know not, but she, the dear, insists, and what am I?"

Titania lay and gasped. The relief was tremendous. Three hours ago she would have refused to think of Rivaulx as Pen's husband. Now she welcomed the notion; she sighed and almost fainted. Rivaulx muttered strange things to himself.

"Can I announce it?"

"No," said the marquis, "it is a secret. But it is all right. I go."

"Take my blessing," said Titania. "Go to her quickly, poor dear, and implore her to let me come to her, and bid her tell all the world. What is her address?"

"I cannot give it," said Rivaulx, pallidly. "It is a secret. But I go, I hasten. Adieu, duchess; I am distracted. Oh, my mother and my country!"

He fled from the room, and, leaving his man to bring on his things, went away at an illegal speed toward London.

"Well, well," said Titania, with a gasp, "I cannot understand anything. But, after all, the marquis is a fine man and of a good family. I could almost sleep a little."

But just as she was composing herself to rest, Mr. Plant sent up word that he wished to see her

for a few moments on urgent business before he went back to town.

"Let him come up," said the duchess. When Plant entered, he stood bolt upright in front of her, with a strange air of determination.

"I shall surprise you, I reckon," he said, in an American accent as thick as petrol fumes. "I know I shall."

"No, you won't," said Titania. "Nothing can surprise me now, I assure you."

"I shall surprise you, ma'am," said Plant, "and you'll have to own it. Prepare yourself and remember that what I tell you is in the nature of a secret. I can stand it no longer. I have to let it out. To hear Lady Penelope, whom I adore, spoken of as I do, makes my blood boil. She may have made some mistakes, but I've made some, too. I am going to surprise you — "

"No, you are not, Mr. Plant," said Titania.

"I — I am Lady Penelope's husband," said Plant, desperately, fixing his eyes on space.

"You are *what?*" shrieked Titania.

"Her husband — and — the parent of the announcement in the *Times,*" said Plant, firmly.

"Am I mad?" asked Titania.

"No, but I am," said Plant, who was as pale

as a traditional ghost. "I'm mad both ways. I want to kill."

"You mustn't," cried Titania, feebly. "I don't know where I am. What did you say? Oh, say it again!"

He said it again, and before she could say anything further, he rushed from the room and bounded down-stairs. She heard him turn his motor-car loose, and knew that in twenty seconds he was a mile away.

"What's wrong with everything, and me, and them?" asked Titania. "I wish I was a dairy-maid in a quiet farm, and had no relations. Am I mad? Did the marquis say it? Or did I dream it?"

Lord Bramber was announced.

"Oh, oh, oh!" said Titania. "Yes, I'll see him."

Bramber came in fuming, and, like the others, fixed his eyes over her head. He was nervous and abrupt.

"I can't stand any more, duchess," he began.

"I can't stand much," said Titania.

"It's a secret of course," said Bramber, "and I'm breaking my word!"

"Are you the husband of Penelope?" asked Titania.

"I — I am," replied Bramber, "and the cause, so to speak, of the notice in the *Times*."

"I thought so," said Titania. "Look at me, Ronald. Do I look mad? does my hair stand on end? do I seem wild and wandering?"

"No, of course not," said Bramber. "I'm telling you this because I feel I ought to. Now I'm going to her at once. This last news was rather unexpected, of course. Good-bye —"

"Stay!" shrieked Titania, but she was too late. Bramber was down-stairs and bounded into his motor-car and let her rip.

"What's the matter with everybody?" wailed Titania. "The marquis made me happy, but now I'm confused, very sadly confused, and I can't think she's married them all."

Gordon was announced, and in about three sentences he told her that, though the affair was a secret, he was Penelope's husband.

"I knew you were," said Titania. "When I heard you wanted to see me, I knew you were coming to say so. Oh, good-bye. Ask Lord Bradstock to send for a doctor. Good-bye, Mr. Gordon. Go now."

And Gordon went, just as De Vere came in.

"You have come to say you have married Penelope, I *know*," said Titania. "I feel sure you have."

"I have a heart for sorrow, for disgrace, for all things lovely. I — I am responsible for everything, even the *Times*," said De Vere, who was as pale as plaster.

"Leave me," said Titania. "Go and see her at once. Settle who it is. Go!"

And when he had gone, Carteret Williams and Carew came one after the other with the same confession. And she received them sadly, and appeared to wander. When the house was empty, she sent for Bradstock.

"Augustin, dear Augustin," she said, "you won't let them put me in an asylum. Have me taken care of at home, won't you? Don't let Goring give me cruel keepers. I am quite gentle and broken down!"

"I won't let anything beastly be done," said Bradstock. "But, my dear child, what's the matter?"

And Titania told him.

"By the Lord," said Bradstock, "they are damned good chaps! but where the devil are we?"

He went down-stairs when the doctor came and told everything to Goring. And Goring told Bob. For Titania forgot to mention to Augustin that all the husbands had insisted it was a dead secret.

"I say," said Bob, "of all the larks I've ever

heard of, this takes the cake! I wonder what I ought to do. I think I'll ask Baker."

And he asked Baker. And in less than twenty-four hours the world knew all about it.

CHAPTER XV.

But when it is said that all the world knew of it, Penelope herself must be excepted. She knew nothing for some time, and, whoever her husband was, he certainly never acquainted her with the horrible details of all the good men who sacrificed their honour in the noble attempt to save her from the results of the terrible misfortune they believed had happened to her. It was, indeed, Miss Mackarness who told her about it, and Miss Mackarness was the old governess whom Penelope had once sacked and sent away. The poor woman was in a terrible state of mind about the affair, and in that was no different from all the rest of the world. To her went Timothy Bunting with the strange story.

"If you please, ma'am, Geordie Smith 'as just brought in a paper wiv a true and pertic'ler account of 'ow all the gents that was courtin' our lady told the Duchess of Goring as 'ow they 'as married 'er!"

"What!" said Miss Mackarness.

"A true and perticuler account as 'ow they 'ad hall married our lady, sayin' as they 'ad concealed it till they could no longer!" repeated Timothy more loudly.

"Good heavens!" said Miss Mackarness, trembling very much, "I fear it will upset Lady Penelope, to say nothing of the infant. Do they all claim the infant, Bunting?"

"I presume so, ma'am," said Bunting. "It looks likely."

"Under these circumstances, Bunting," cried Miss Mackarness, "I feel it is my duty to communicate the facts to our lady. Give me the paper, Bunting!"

Bunting said he would get it, and came back with a hatful of fragments.

"If you please, ma'am, this is hall I can rescue of the details. The cook and the parlour-maid and the two 'ousemaids 'ave fought over it in the servants' 'all, and are now in tears, not 'aving read a word."

And Miss Mackarness took the hatful up to Penelope, who sat with her nurse and the cause of all the trouble in a south room overlooking the moat.

"In the name of all that is wonderful, what's in that hat?" asked Penelope.

"It is Timothy Bunting's hat, my lady," replied the Mackarness.

"So I perceive," said Penelope. "Is a bird in it?"

"Oh, no, my lady. It's the bits of a newspaper," replied the housekeeper, as if she served up the *Times* in a groom's hat every day. "It's Timothy's hat, but a clean new one."

"But why do you bring it, and why do you put newspaper in it?" asked Penelope.

"If you please, my lady, I cannot help it. The cook and the parlour-maid and the two housemaids fought over it in the servants' hall, and are now in tears, not having read a word of it."

To all appearance the housekeeper had lost her senses. Though this was no wonder, Penelope wondered at it.

"Well," she said at last, "I see what's in the hat, but what's in the newspaper?"

"If you please, my lady, according to Timothy Bunting and Smith, who appear to have read it, it contains the true account of what happened at Goring House the other day, when all the gentlemen staying there, hearing from the *Times* that your ladyship had a fine boy on the eighteenth, and no husband named by your ladyship's particular directions, all got up one after the other, and, re-

questing private interviews with her upset Grace, the duchess, declared upon their oaths, though in secret, that they had married you themselves!"

She recited this in a strange, mechanical way, which would have been extremely effective upon the stage, as a picture of hopeless conventionality wounded to death, and at last dying in sheer indifference to all things.

"Dear me!" said Penelope, "dear me!"

"It furthermore appears, my lady, begging your pardon for mentioning it, and I have reproved Bunting bitterly for daring to do so, though I haven't read the fragments in the hat, that no one believes your ladyship's word at all as to your being married."

"Oh, how shameful!" said Penelope. "Why, here's baby!"

The nurse coughed and hid her mouth with her hand.

"Yes, my lady, so he is," said Miss Mackarness. "There doesn't seem any doubt whatsoever about that, but —"

And Penelope sighed. Suddenly her face lighted up.

"Ah!" she said, "I see why they said it to aunty. How very, very noble of them! I knew they were all splendid men; men of the highest

character and attainments and possibilities. Will you have telegrams written out to all of them, saying, 'Your conduct is noble, and I am deeply grateful'?"

"Yes, my lady," replied the housekeeper, "and how will you sign it?"

"Sign it Penelope Brading," said Penelope. "And tell Smith to take his car as quickly as he can to Spilsborough, and send them from there."

She lay back in her pillows.

"They are noble fellows," she said. "I have done them an immense amount of good. A year ago not one of them could have risen to such heights of abnegation, such love, such tenderness. I shall see them bringing in a new era yet. Leopold Gordon will inaugurate a new and pure finance. The dear marquis will abolish anti-Semitism and duelling in France. De Vere will write poems of a purity appealing equally to Brixton and Belgravia, and my dear friend Carew will vindicate the Royal Academy's policy of showing that charity begins at home. And the rest — ah, me! Poor dear aunty, how I love her!"

And by the time that she had pondered over a renewed world, Geordie Smith was sending off the wires from Spilsborough with wonderful results.

"I like this," said Smith. "This is what I like! There's nothing dull about it. I wonder what'll happen now? I'll lay five to one I can guess!"

He guessed right as to some, for in about four hours Rufus Plant arrived in Spilsborough on his racing-car, and put up at the Grand Hotel.

"I guess she must be somewhere in this neighbourhood," said Plant. "And here I stay till I find her. And by the tail of the sacred bull, whatever happens, I'll marry her right here in this hyer noble pile of a cathedral. And if she'll do it, I'll restore it for the authorities free of charge, till it's as gawdy as a breastpin and right up to date."

He ran against Gordon, and the two men fell back in horrible surprise.

"You —"

"You!"

"Oh, yes," said Plant, "I'm here on business connected with the cathedral."

"And I'm to see the — bishop, who will join the board on allotment," mumbled Gordon.

And then Goby roared into town on his motor-car. The others saw him, and he saw them, and ignored them palely. He, too, put up at the Grand, but never spoke to them. And De Vere came in while they were at dinner, and sat down opposite

to Goby. He said, "Oh!" and, rising, at once bolted from the table.

"I'm damned," said Goby, and he lost his appetite.

"How many more of us?" they asked themselves.

They looked up at every one who entered.

"Bramber will be in any moment," said Plant.

Poor De Vere sat in his bedroom and was ill.

"If I look out into the corridor, I *know* I shall see that beast Williams," he sobbed.

"Where's that French fool, Rivaulx?" asked Gordon. They all believed the other was the scoundrel of the dreadful drama.

And then the evening papers came in. They declared in big lines that there had been "A Fracas in High Life." They added that it had taken place in the Row at four o'clock that very afternoon. They went on to say that Lord Bramber and the Marquis de Rivaulx, well known as a great sportsman and a balloonist, had fought in a flower-bed, and had been torn from each other's arms and a big rhododendron by two dukes, three earls, and a viscount. They further declared that it was a matter of public notoriety that all the trouble rose out of the mystery connected with the *Times* and

Lady Penelope Brading. They promised more details in later editions.

"They'll fight," said Gordon, savagely. "I hope they'll kill each other. But especially I hope that the marquis will be killed first and most!"

And about eleven o'clock Rivaulx turned up with his chauffeur and a bad black eye.

"He shall fight me here," said Rivaulx. "This is a quiet town. No one will think of Spilsborough! He does not know that *she* sent me a telegram from here!"

He put up at the Angel, and escaped seeing the others for the time. On his way up he had sent a defiant telegram to Bramber, desiring him to come to Spilsborough, and fight there with swords or pistols or any weapon that commended itself to him. This telegram Bramber never got, for, on reaching home and washing away the traces of the struggle in Hyde Park before all the loveliness of London, he had found his telegram from Spilsborough sent by Geordie Smith. After looking in the A B C guide, and finding no good train, he pelted off in his motor-car, leaving a note for Rivaulx, saying that, though duels were absurd and illegal, he would not refuse to meet the marquis in France or Belgium, if he desired to make a bigger fool of himself than he had already done in the park.

"Curse and confound them all," said Bramber, who was horribly cross and exceedingly sick of the whole world, even including Penelope. "I wonder what she means by this telegram. I wish I was dead! Is she at Spilsborough?"

Just in the middle of Spilsborough he met Rivaulx and pulled up short, not having the least notion, of course, that he would meet him there. But Rivaulx grinned a ghastly smile and raised his hat, as Bramber stopped.

"Ha, I am pleased to see you," said the French marquis. "You have come quickly. It is a fine night, there is a moon, and close by here under the shadow of the cathedral there is a most beautiful piece of grass. There we will fight. I have brought swords with me. Or have you brought guns?"

"I haven't brought guns," said Bramber, who was entirely stunned and at a loss for a word.

The marquis bowed.

"We will fight with swords, my lord. I think this hotel is good; the lady is amiable; there are rooms to spare. When the moon rises, ha! I will call you forth."

And Bramber went to the hotel to think what he should do.

"The ass! the lunatic! How did he get here? I can't get out of fighting him."

He sat outside in his car.

"No, I won't. I'm damned if I do!" he said.

He went in and wrote a note for Rivaulx, who was out in the cathedral close picking what he considered a good place for a duel. The spot he chose was not far from the dean's house.

"I wish it had been Mr. Plant," he said. "Of Bramber, who is a young ass, I am not jealous. But of Plant I am horribly jealous, and he is a bad man. If I met Plant I would say, 'Fight me at once now, and I will put off Lord Bramber till another day.'"

And, going around the corner, he ran right into Plant, who was raging about the town, wondering where Penelope was and how everything was going to end.

"The scoundrel is that marquis," said Plant. And he ran into the scoundrel's arms.

And just while Bramber was shaking the dust of Spilsborough from the tires of his motor-car, Bob himself came into the town in a hired Daimler, full of the most extraordinary news. And Titania was having a series of fits down at Goring, with Dr. Lumsden Griff in attendance.

CHAPTER XVI.

It cannot be imagined that Titania, who had survived so many shocks, was ill for nothing. When Bob discovered what she was ill of, he stood outside on the lawn with his hands deep in his pockets and with his legs wide apart.

"I must tell 'em this at once," said Bob, gloomily. "If I don't tell Gordon, he'll forget he's invested a hundred of mine in something to make hair curl, and I shall lose the money. I mean to make money to keep up Goring by and by. And he said he'd make me a director, too. For the sake of the family, I can't neglect him. Or De Vere, either. Or any of 'em. But — but I never thought it of Pen!"

With his pockets full of money derived from the sale of dogs to De Vere, he rushed off to the station and caught a train for town. When he reached London, he sent a wire to "Old Guth."

"I'm in town on important business. Break it to grandmother between fits. I hope to be back to-morrow."

He rushed off to Park Lane to find Gordon.

"Mr. Gordon has gone to Spilsborough, sir," said Gordon's man.

"D— I mean confound it!" said Bob. He went to Plant's.

"Mr. Plant went to Spilsborough in a great hurry this afternoon, sir," said Plant's landlady. The American millionaire still lived in Bloomsbury, though not on ten shillings a week.

"Oh," said Bob, "I wonder what this means. There's a secret here!"

He drove in a hansom to find Bramber. A very ingenuous piece of humanity in buttons told Bob that Lord Bramber came in about four o'clock torn to ribbons, and found a telegram waiting him.

"And off he went in his motor-car."

"Where?" asked Bob.

"I don't know," said the buttons. But on Bob's going to Bramber's room, he found the A B C open on the table at the page with Spilsborough on it.

"Sherlock Holmes would say he has gone to Spilsborough," cried Bob. "And if Gordon and Plant have gone there, too, I'll bet all the rest have gone. I'll go, too."

But there was no train for three hours!

"I'm done," said Bob. "No, I'm not. I'll hire a motor-car."

He went to the nearest place in Regent Street and hired one.

"Very well, sir," said the man, "but it's rather expensive, you know."

Bob pulled out a handful of sovereigns.

"Take as many as you think fair," he said, grandly. "And don't forget I want a speedy one, and a man that can drive, and I'll pay the fines of course!"

That was how he came to Spilsborough just in time and about the hour when the moon was to rise. He passed a motor-car in the ditch about ten miles out of the cathedral city, and did not stop to find out what was the matter. He thus missed the discovery that Bramber and his chauffeur were both sitting upon the wreck, using very awful language to each other on the subject of losing the way and coming bolt down a side road into the opposing hedge. It is astonishing how an accident at thirty miles an hour brings owners and mechanics down to the same human level.

When Bob reached Spilsborough, he was covered with dust, but was as spry as a grasshopper and awfully full of his news.

"You *can* drive," said Bob to his man. "I'm very much pleased with you. Stop at this hotel."

He went into the Angel, and staggered blithely to the office.

"Is Mr. Gordon here, or Mr. Plant, or the Marquis of Rivaulx?" he demanded.

He thus discovered the marquis.

He drove off to the Grand, and found Plant and Goby and De Vere and Gordon were there. They were all in bed but Plant, and Plant had gone to see the cathedral by moonlight.

"All right, we'll put up here," said Bob, "and I'll see if I can find Plant. I say, I wonder what Baker will think of this? It beats me!"

He got to the cathedral precincts just about an hour after Rivaulx and Plant had run into each other's arms. Much had occurred since then.

For Rivaulx started back from Plant and almost forgot the existence of Bramber.

"You are a scoundrrrel," said Rivaulx, rolling his r's in the most fearful manner.

"You are a lunatic," replied Plant, coolly; "when did you escape?"

"I have not escaped, I am here," snorted Rivaulx, "but you shall not escape. I meant to kill Lord Bramber upon this spot, but I prefer to keel you. I let him go; he is nothing. You are the scoundrrel!"

"Oh, dry up!" said Plant, crossly. "You tire

me, you fatigue me very much. I am exhausted by looking at you. Go home, or I will break you in three pieces and eat them!"

Rivaulx foamed at the mouth.

"Do you refuse to fight me, sare?"

"Certainly not," said Plant. "Take your coat off and hang it on a tombstone, and I'll leave nothing of you but a smear."

"I do not fight with fists," said Rivaulx, contemptuously. "I fight with swords, with steel, with guns or pistols."

Plant shook his head.

"I've none of 'em about me, my son!"

"At the hotel I have swords," cried Rivaulx, eagerly. "I brought them to kill Bramber, who punched my eye in the Rotten Row, and we rolled in bushes. But I will first fight you. Wait and I fetch the swords."

He ran violently into the darkness, and Plant sat on a railing.

"What am I to do? Am I to wait and fight a lunatic? Or shall I go back to the hotel? I think I'll go back. If that raging idiot is found prancing about here with swords, they will run him in."

But he did not know how fast the marquis could run and how near the hotel was. Before he had

made up his mind to go, Rivaulx came back again. He flung the swords at Plant's feet.

"Take one and let us begin," he said.

"I think on the whole I'll have both," said Plant, suiting the action to the word. "Now go home, marquis, like a good little boy, and come to the Grand Hotel in the morning and tell me why you want to be hanged in England."

He put both the weapons under his arm.

"You will not fight?" said the marquis, gasping like a dying dolphin.

"What kind of a galoot do you reckon me?" asked Plant, quite unintelligibly.

"Ha!" said the marquis, "I know not what a galoot is, but I will fight you here and leave your body on the grass."

Neither of them had observed the approach of a portly and pleasant gentleman behind them. He was now leaning upon the railing, watching them with a great deal of kindly curiosity.

"I think, gentlemen, that the dean will object," he said at length, and they both turned around suddenly.

"You must not interfere," said Rivaulx; "we do not know you."

"To be sure, to be sure," replied the gentleman, who was dressed very curiously, as Rivaulx noticed.

RUFUS Q PLANT
Born in Virginia

"I hate interfering, especially with anything belonging to a dean. Deans, gentlemen, are very touchy about matters connected with their cathedrals. Now Dean Briggs, gentlemen, takes the very greatest care of that grass on which you both are now illegally trampling, and I understand that he has made a rule never to have duels upon it. He is very firm on that point. Do I mistake you if I say that it looks to an unprejudiced observer as if you were going to fight a duel?"

Rivaulx bowed.

"I do not know you, sare, and I do not want to. I want to keel this man, who is a scoundrrel."

The stranger addressed Plant.

"And are you equally anxious to break this very rigid rule of the dean's?" he asked, suavely.

"Certainly not," replied Plant; "I want to go to bed."

"I am delighted to hear it. I am intensely gratified to hear it. If one duellist, having possession of both deadly weapons, desires to go to bed, I cannot see anything to hinder him, unless, indeed, he wants to lie down on Mr. Dean's grass. You see, gentlemen, I am a bishop, and a bishop's first desire is to be on good terms with the dean. If Mr. Dean heard that I encouraged any one to break his rules about duelling or going to bed in the precincts of

this cathedral, I should *not* be on good terms with him, I assure you."

"I do not understand," said Rivaulx. "I want to fight, that is all I want to do!"

"Stay!" said the bishop, mildly. "If the somewhat excited gentleman, who is, I gather, not an Englishman, will accompany me a few yards, we will go to the dean's, with whom I have been dining, and will refer the matter to him."

"Of course," said Plant, "that is the right thing to do. Marquis, his lordship the bishop suggests the only course open to gentlemen. I trust you will accept his offer, and, if you do, I undertake to fight you if the dean gives his permission."

"Stay, sare, my lord the bishop," said Rivaulx, "one moment, sare, the bishop. Is this dean of whom you speak a gentleman?"

"Certainly, certainly," replied the bishop, hastily. "He is of the highest breeding, and in his youth he fenced like a fencing-master."

"Then he understands the code of honour, sare the bishop?"

"Absolutely, for a dean," replied his lordship.

"Then I agree, sir lord," cried Rivaulx.

"Ha, we will go to his house, then," said the bishop, "if you will step over this railing. But stop here one moment and observe the moon rising

over Mr. Dean's cathedral. Is it not a peaceful, pleasant spot, gentlemen?"

"It beats thunder," said Plant.

"It does, it does," nodded his lordship. "Many Americans, who admire this cathedral immensely, have made the same acute observation. May I ask your names, gentlemen? I am the bishop of this diocese."

"My name is Plant, Rufus Q. Plant, and my friend is the Marquis of Rivaulx."

"Indeed," returned the bishop, "is the gentleman the French nobleman who is interested in balloons?"

"Yes," said Plant.

"Dear me! I am delighted," said his lordship. "I, too, am interested in balloons. I saw one go up once."

"You like them?" asked Rivaulx, warmly. "That is good! I will take you up in one."

"We will talk of it later," said the bishop, rather hastily for a man of his gentle flowing speech. "But this is the dean's house. If I knock at this window, he will put his head out."

He knocked at the window, and Mr. Dean did put his head out.

"I am *so* loath to disturb you, Mr. Dean," said his lordship, "but, as I was leaving you and taking

a little stroll before retiring, I met two gentlemen, one from the United States and one a French marquis, who were engaged in a warm discussion on a point of honour. I am ignorant of the exact point, and I dare say there is no necessity for our knowing. As a result of this discussion, the French marquis desired to fight a duel with swords (you will observe them under the arm of the gentleman from the United States), and I ventured to intervene, as the duel was to take place upon your grass."

"Humph, indeed!" said the dean, in great astonishment. "And what did you say?"

"I said that it was against your rules to allow any one to fight duels there. Was I not right?"

"Rather!" said the dean. "I should say so."

"And on the other hand," continued the bishop, "the gentleman from across the Atlantic wished to go to bed."

"Then why the — why doesn't he?" asked the dean.

"It seemed to me that the gentleman from across the water wanted to go to bed upon your grass," said the bishop. "I pointed out to him that there was a very old and strict rule dating from the time beyond record which forbade this. Was I not right?"

"You were," said the dean. "I never go to

bed on the grass myself, and do not permit others to do so. I never fight duels there, either, and do not allow it."

"You see, gentlemen," said the bishop, but before he could add another word Bob rushed right upon the group outside the dean's windows, and saw that Plant made one of them. He saw the swords also, and then recognized Rivaulx.

"Oh, I say," said Bob, "you were going to fight a duel about Pen! I've come in time! It's no good. She has married Timothy Bunting, her groom!"

CHAPTER XVII.

It was such an awful shock to Plant and Rivaulx, and, for the matter of that, to his lordship the Bishop of Spilsborough, that they all gasped dreadfully. Plant took the bishop by the sleeve. Rivaulx lay down upon the grass under the dean's window, and howled as he tore at the turf. The dean said:

"I'll come out! This is becoming serious!"

He came out, and, as he opened the door, the light of the hall lamp fell upon Bob's face.

"Good heavens!" said the bishop, "I thought I knew the voice. Is that you, Robert Goring?"

Bob said it was, but added that he didn't know the bishop.

"Boy, I christened you," said the bishop. "Is all this trouble about Penelope Brading, whom I also christened?"

"Yes," replied Bob; "shall I tell you about it?"

"Let us retire a few paces, and you can tell me," said the bishop. "In the meantime, Mr. Dean, I beg you to exercise patience with the French nobleman on the grass. Come, Bob."

"Well, it's awful rot, you know," said Bob, speaking very rapidly. "We don't know where we are in the family, and grandmother is lying on a sofa screaming."

"Why, Bob?"

"You must have heard of it."

The bishop had heard a great deal, but not all.

"Pen says she's married and has a kid," said Bob, "and she won't say who it is. And all these josers, including Plant, he's the American over there, and the marquis chewing the grass, said they had married her themselves. Do you see, sir, — my lord, I mean?"

"I see," said the bishop, putting his finger-tips together. "It was, I think, very noble of them."

"But granny said it was very trying, and it made her ill, for she wasn't any further than before, unless Pen had married them all. And grandfather, who kept cool, said that was unlikely."

"It certainly seems unlikely," said the bishop. "But when you came to us, you made some very astonishing remarks about a groom, one Bunting, I think. Now what is there to know about him?"

"Weekes said that, the beast!" cried Bob.

"Who is the beast Weekes?" asked the bishop.

Bob told him who Miss Harriet Weekes was.

"And not an hour after these had said they were

married to Pen, this Weekes woman came in black and in a cab and said she must see granny. And granny saw her, and is now in fits, with the doctor feeling her pulse and giving her brandy. For Weekes was very solemn (I listened), and she said: 'Your Grace, I shall reveal the truth, which lies upon my bosom like a tombstone. Her ladyship treated me cruel, and gave me the sack moreover, and *I've* no call to be silent no more 'avin' diskivered the truth.' She talks like that. Weekes is an uneducated beast, and why Pen ever had her as a maid I can't tell. And granny was confused with the others, having said they were all married to Pen, and she waggled her head awfully. 'I shall surprise your Grace,' said Weekes, and granny said she wouldn't. And she said, 'I shall surprise your Grace, for I've to reveal that I know the man, the serpent, that her ladyship 'as married.' And granny smiled very curiously, and said, 'Weekes, who do you say it is?' And then Weekes cried, the crocodile, and she said that Penelope had married Timothy Bunting, the groom, and that Timothy had been engaged to her, and had as good as told her that he was looking high and despised a public-house at a corner. I don't know what she meant. And she was so solemn and furious that granny believed her, and went off into fit after fit most

awful, my lord, and they sent for the doctor, and I came away, for I knew the others would fight when they learnt that all of them had said the same thing. And I believe it is Timothy myself."

"Dear, dear me!" said the bishop, "this is even more remarkable than I anticipated from the very strange reports in the papers. But I think you have done well, Robert, and I do not regret having christened you by any means, which is more than I can say for some of the aristocracy. Let us return to the dean, who is, I am afraid, having some trouble with the French marquis. He is not accustomed to foreign noblemen and to Americans, except when they come here to see his cathedral."

They turned toward the deanery, where Rivaulx was still rolling on the grass.

"Do you think it is Timothy?" asked Bob.

The bishop shook his head gently.

"I do not see what grounds we have to go on, Robert. Here we have an American who states, if I understand you rightly, that he has married my poor Penelope, and a French marquis of high repute who also states the same. And there are others —"

"Five or six!" said Bob.

"And there are five or six others who commit themselves to the same statement. And then a

lady's maid says she knows that Penelope has married a groom. I do not see what logical grounds we have for concluding anything more than that some one has told a lie, or that Penelope has been breaking the law by marrying more than one man at a time. Speaking *a priori,* I think this latter alternative unlikely, and, as a matter of probability, I am forced to believe that only one at least out of seven (is it seven?) gentlemen of unblemished reputation has told the truth."

It was all very sad. But there were practical details to be attended to. Though the marquis had ceased to raise the echoes of the stilly night, to say nothing of the echoes of the cathedral's west front, he was still in a fearfully mournful condition. He was now weeping in the dean's arms, and the dean was endeavouring to soothe him as best he could. When the bishop came back, Mr. Dean seemed much relieved.

"Don't you think you could get them to go away, bishop?" he inquired, pathetically. "This kind of thing is beyond my experience, and I am extremely fatigued by it."

"I will do my best," replied the bishop.

Turning to the marquis, he said:

"Get up, marquis. I will walk with you to the hotel. Mr. Plant, please follow with Robert, and

be good enough to take care of those lethal instruments, which are, I rejoice to say, little understood in a quiet cathedral town. It appears to me we are all in a state of mind which needs repose. On the morrow, after I have slept upon it, I shall be happy to receive you all and give you the best advice in my power. Now, marquis, I am waiting for you. The grass is damp."

And they walked to the hotel, leaving the dean staring open-mouthed.

"This is very unusual," sighed the dean. "I cannot recollect anything exactly like it in my long experience."

No more could the bishop. Plant was in the same state of mind. Rivaulx wept silently. Bob was in the seventh heaven of delight, in spite of Bunting. He thoroughly believed in what Harriet Weekes said. Neither Plant nor Rivaulx knew that he knew they both claimed to be Pen's husband.

"This story of Bunting is a goldarned lie," said Plant, hoarsely. Bob did not reply. He was sorry for them all, and relied on the bishop. What he relied on him for he did not know. All he did know was that the bishop seemed fully equal to the situation.

"How many more of you are there, Mr. Plant?" he asked at length.

"Gordon and Goby and De Vere," replied Plant, miserably.

"I must see Mr. Gordon," said Bob. And then they came to the Angel. By this time Rivaulx and the bishop were great friends, for Rivaulx was a clerical in his heart of hearts, and, if there wasn't a Catholic bishop to lean on, a Protestant one was a good substitute. He stopped weeping, and held the bishop's hand.

"You are a good man, sare bishop," he said. "I wish I was a good bishop, but I cannot. Life is a very terrible thing. I wish I could cut my throat. I am weary."

"I should go to bed," said the bishop, "and I'll look in and see you in the morning. Bed is the best place when one is weary. I assure you that I am not wholly ignorant of the world, or of the desire to cut my throat, but I find that after a good night's rest the wish to do so evaporates, and one determines to live for another twelve hours at least. But before you go, I hope you will give me your word that you will cut no one else's."

"I give it," said Rivaulx. "The desire to kill Mr. Plant has left me. I am no longer furious, even with Bramber. I am simply sad and fearfully mournful. I thank you, sare; good night."

"Good night," said the bishop. "Stay, marquis, I think Mr. Plant has the weapons."

The marquis waved them off.

"I have no need of them. I give them you, sare bishop. Take them."

And when the bishop had bidden Plant and Bob good night, and had arranged to see Bob in the morning, the curious sight might have been witnessed of a great ornament of the Episcopal bench walking through the precincts of the cathedral to his palace, with a couple of duelling-swords under his arm.

"This has been a very interesting evening," said the bishop. "I very much wonder what Ridley will think when he sees me come in. A butler's mind is naturally limited."

He went in and gave the swords to Ridley.

"Take these," said his lordship.

"Yes, m'lord," said Ridley, stolidly.

"I think you can hang them up in the dining-room, Ridley."

"Yes, m'lord."

"They are trophies, Ridley."

"So I perceive, m'lord," said Ridley.

"What *are* trophies, Ridley?"

"These, m'lord," said Ridley.

"Exactly so," said his lordship.

And while he was taking off his gaiters and thinking of Penelope, Bob was sitting on the edge of Gordon's bed and telling him all about it.

"Why are you here?" asked Bob.

"She sent me a telegram," said poor Gordon.

"I say, what about?"

"Sayin' I wath a noble character and so on," replied Gordon, miserably, "and I came here at onth becauth the telegram came from here."

As the sleep went out of his eyes, he talked less Hebraically.

"I thought she might be here," he added, shaking his curly head.

Bob thought very hard.

"I say, this is awfully mixed, Mr. Gordon, because I know you told granny you were married to Pen!"

Gordon gulped something down. It was probably very bad language.

"So — so I am," he said, sternly, without looking at Bob.

"Rivaulx says so, too."

"The devil!" cried Gordon.

"And so does Goby and Rivaulx and Bramber and De Vere and all of 'em!"

Gordon fell back on his pillows.

"So you see," said Bob, "we're no further than

we were, except that Weekes, who used to be Pen's maid, came to granny this afternoon and told her, the beast, that Pen had married Timothy Bunting!"

Gordon bounced out of bed in his night-shirt.

"Who the devil is Timothy Bunting?" he roared.

Bob told him.

"It's a lie — a lie!"

"Of course it must be, if you've married her, as you say," said Bob. "But perhaps I'm disturbing you. Would you like to go to sleep?"

"Very much indeed," replied Gordon. "I should like to go to sleep and stay asleep. I wish you'd go and serve Goby and De Vere as you've served me!"

"I'm so sorry," said Bob, "but you always said you wanted any news, and that's why I told you first."

Gordon held out his hand, and Bob shook it warmly.

"By the way," he asked, "what about the hair restorer?"

"What hair restorer?" asked the astonished Hebrew.

"The one you put ninety pounds of mine in, sir."

"It wasn't in a hair restorer. What makes you say so?"

"Well," replied Bob, "I thought it was. You said it would make my hair curl. How much did it make, whatever it was?"

A glow of pleasure spread over Gordon's sad countenance. Making money was something even in despair.

"My boy, I bought you Amalekites at half a crown, five hundred and sixty of 'em, and now they're at £4."

"Dear me," said Bob, "how much does that make? Why, it's £2,240."

"Less commission," agreed the financier.

"By Jove, that's a very, very good beginning," said Bob. "Do you think they will go up more, Mr. Gordon?"

Gordon looked at him and sighed.

"They might. But don't you think it would be safer to get out now, Bob?"

Bob shook his head.

"I'll follow your advice, sir, of course. If it was only myself, I'd take the money, but I'm thinking of Goring, when my father and grandfather and uncle die. What I want is fifty thousand, at least. Grandfather often says that is the least that can put the house on its legs again. Let me see, £2,240

is eight times four times £90. That's thirty-two times £90. What's thirty-two times £2,240?"

"Seventy-one thousand six hundred and eighty," replied Gordon, promptly.

"That would do very well indeed," said Bob. "Please go on, sir, till it's that. Or shall I take half and ask Mr. Plant to do something with it? He offered to help me."

"Certainly not," replied Gordon, angrily. "Plant's a reckless speculator and a liar, and he'll wake up some day worth half a million less than nothing. I'll do my best for you and Goring, Bob."

"I'm sure you will, sir," said Bob. "Good night, Mr. Gordon. I'm sorry if I've worried you."

And he went off to worry Goby. Gordon walked up and down the room weeping.

"If I only had a boy like that!" he cried. "By Moses and all the prophets, I'll put Amalekites up sky-high, and squeeze the bears till they howl. Oh, Pen, Pen!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

By breakfast-time or a little later, Goby and Gordon and De Vere and Rivaulx knew not only what was said about Timothy Bunting, but also that every one of them had told the Duchess of Goring that he was married to Penelope. When the bishop looked in to see the marquis, he found him exceedingly difficult to manage. He wanted the duelling-swords back in order to fight every one. His especial desire now was to put cold steel through Gordon, and this led to a general evacuation of Spilsborough.

"I say, Mr Gordon," said Bob, rushing in upon the financier while he was shaving, "I've just met the bishop, and he wanted to know if I knew you, and I said 'rather,' and he said would I ask you, in the interests of peace, to go back to London, because the marquis wanted to cut your throat with swords hanging in the bishop's dining-room. I say, will you go, or stay and fight?"

Gordon cut himself, and then, as Bob said, "cut his stick" and went back to town shaved on one side and not on the other. As a result of this, several men in the city sold bears of everything that Gordon was interested in, and they got left most horribly, especially on Amalekites. Never afterward did they venture to think that any financier was on the borders of ruin if he came into the city partially shaved. In fact, three very shady Jews, with some wildcat stock to boom, played the trick successfully, and, through not being shaved themselves, they shaved others.

But this is all by the way, and it only shows that a real financier in love or in despair is just as dangerous as at other times. Bob and the bishop talked the situation over in Spilsborough while Gordon was going to town, and the result was what might have been expected.

"All we know is that Penelope, poor dear Penelope is near Spilsborough," said the bishop.

"And that she's married," said Bob.

"We infer that from general grounds, our knowledge of her character," said the logical bishop. "Strictly we cannot be said to know it. It is not a primary datum of consciousness, nor is it a judgment or a purely rational conclusion, Bob."

"Oh," said Bob, "well, perhaps not."

"I think," said the bishop, "that I shall write to her —"

"Where to?"

"To everywhere," said the bishop, "and ask her to come and confide in me. And in the meantime, as the others have gone, and your presence here is no longer necessary, I think you should go home and console your grandmother, and apply yourself to work."

"All right," said Bob; "I don't think it's interesting here any more. But are you glad I came in time to stop the duel?"

"I am glad," said the bishop. "But, to tell the truth, Robert, I should not have allowed a duel on Mr. Dean's ancient grass and under his immemorial elms without a remonstrance, even a physical remonstrance."

Within the memory of this portly and admirable pillar of the Church to which the British Empire owes all its greatness, and to which it pays a great deal of its money, were many fierce encounters at Oxford, that haunt of ancient peace and modern progress.

"Would you have knocked 'em down?" asked Bob, eagerly.

"Certainly," said the bishop. "I would have knocked them as flat as a flounder."

And Bob bade him good-bye.

"I think he's a ripping good bishop," said Bob. "I'll ask Mr. Gordon to help restore the cathedral."

He got back to Goring to find Titania no longer suffering from fits. Fits were not equal to the situation. All her friends were writing to her to condole with her on the marriage of Penelope to Timothy Bunting. They came down in droves to condole and to get the latest intelligence, while gamekeepers and grooms were keeping journalists out of the grounds with guns and pitchforks.

For the world was absolutely certain that Miss Weekes was right, and Pen's *ci-devant* maid was making the salary of a star at the Empire by according interviews to those halfpenny papers which are England's glory and her hope. The editors endeavoured to interview the lovers, but they were stern and savage. They would not speak to each other and avoided strangers. But it was no secret now that they each claimed to be Lady Penelope's husband. As the acutest journalist of them all remarked, this was hardly possible. The only theory that held water (or, at least, "*good*" water, as the Baboo pleader remarked) was the Bunting theory. But if Bunting was the man, where was he? and why this mystery? A journalist solved it, or said

he did. Bunting was a very handsome man. There was no doubt of that. But he was an uneducated man. That was quite certain. If a lady of Penelope's standing married a man of Bunting's, what would she do? The answer was easy. She would send him to Oxford to acquire the accent and the aplomb and the insolence which have rendered Oxford men the idols of the mob, and have put them into every position where tact with inferior races is a *sine qua non*. This is what the journalist said. He ought to have known, as he had been brought up in the Yorkshire Dissenting College, and dissented from all other codes of manners, except those popular with the non-conformist conscience, which, equally with the Church of England, has made the empire what it is and what it should be.

But this journalist knew his market. The eyes of the civilized world once more turned to Oxford.

"If it's Bunting, I'll kill him," said all the lovers who were not married to Penelope. "She has made a mistake, if it's true, and he must be got rid of."

Now was the time of the Marchioness of Rigsby's glory.

"Did I not tell you she had married her groom?" she demanded of Titania. "Penelope was extremely rude to me. I am almost glad she

has married a groom. If he is a nice groom, he may improve her manners."

"She hasn't married any groom," cried Titania, furiously. "I am perfectly certain it is the Marquis of Rivaulx."

She was certain of nothing. Bradstock was certain of nothing. They both asked Bob what he was certain of, and Bob replied all the lovers were in such a state of mind that it couldn't be any of them. And then at last Titania hit upon a certain truth.

"Whoever it is would be just as miserable as all the others," she said. "He'll be sorry now that he agreed to it, and he'll be asking her to give in, and she won't. And they'll quarrel."

"You're right, Titania," cried Bradstock, slapping his thigh. "Bob, I believe the most miserable of them all is the man. Which is the most miserable?"

Bob thought.

"Gordon cried a little."

"Ha!" said the duchess.

"But Rivaulx cried a good deal," said Bob.

"Oh," said the duchess. "But which do you think it is, Robert?"

"I think it's Timothy Bunting," said Bob.

"And I want to go to Oxford to find out if he's there. Baker says —"

"Do you discuss these matters with Baker?" demanded his grandmother, haughtily.

"He knows a great deal about the world," said Bob, "and about Bunting, you know. Baker says —"

"You may go to Oxford," cried Titania, "and I will go to bed and stay there. I am a most unhappy woman, and Goring does not care!"

So Bob went to Oxford all by himself, and called upon an undergraduate who had just come up from Harrow, one of the schools which Bob had been requested to leave on account of pugilism. Jack Harcourt was four years Bob's senior, but could not fight so well in spite of that, and there was much more equality between them than would seem possible at first sight. But then it is almost impossible to feel very much superior to a boy who has knocked you absolutely senseless, as Bob did Harcourt. And Bob was one of those boys who make all the world equal. He was familiar with princes, and said "Baker says" to cabinet ministers. And if his uncle didn't marry, he was bound to be a duke. Dukes are very important people, somehow, and the fact that Bob never showed any side was

much in his favour over and above that important fact.

"I say, is there a man up here called Bunting?" asked Bob.

And Harcourt, after consulting a calendar, said there was.

"Timothy Bunting?" asked Bob, jumping as if he were shot.

"Thomas," said Harcourt.

"Oh, he'd say Thomas, I dare say," said Bob. And he told Harcourt all about it.

"Do you think she's married him?" asked the undergraduate.

"Who knows what girls will do?" said Bob. "Don't you remember the black-eyed one in the pastry-cook's at Harrow who wouldn't look at you and was in love with that beast Black?"

Harcourt did remember, but changed the conversation as quickly as possible.

"This fellow is at All Saints," he said. "I dare say, they'd let a groom in there."

"Let's go and find him," said Bob. "Poor old Bunting will be sick to see me. I'm very sorry for him if he is a presumptuous beast. It will be very awkward for the family. But we must know. The uncertainty is killing my grandmother, and Baker says it's always best to know the worst at once.

Baker's the best judge of dogs and horses I know. He was a sergeant in the Dublin Fusiliers. Oh, I told you that!"

And when they got into the High Street, they ran right into Plant, who smiled a sickly smile and said he had come up to have a look at Oxford.

"I say, Mr. Plant, what's the matter with your clothes?" asked Bob. "Have you fallen downstairs?"

Plant murmured something unintelligible and hurried away, leaving Bob staring.

"That's one of 'em, Harcourt," he said to his friend. "He's a millionaire."

"Then I think he might afford a hat without a dint in it," replied Harcourt.

Bob shook his head.

"I can't make it out. He's very particular," he said. "But let's get on."

Around the next corner they bumped into Gordon, who also announced that he had been struck with a wild desire to have a look at the ancient university city. Bob shook his head.

"I say, Mr. Gordon, you want brushing badly. Do you know you look as if you had fallen downstairs?" he asked.

Gordon said, "Do I?" and bolted.

"I can't make this out," said Bob. "This has all the appearance of a mystery, Harcourt."

"It has," said Harcourt. As they entered All Saints, they saw a man run across the grass and disappear under the far archway which led out into the Turl.

"That looked very much like De Vere," said Bob, "very much. Only I never saw him run except that time when the bulldog chased him. And then he ran differently. But of course it can't be De Vere."

After asking two reverend-looking members of the university, who looked as if they knew all about the subjective world, and a scout with every appearance of a deep acquaintance with the objective one, they discovered Mr. Bunting's rooms.

"I think he's havin' some gents to lunch, though I'm not his scout, sir, and they seems to be enjoying themselves now very much," said the scout. "Mr. Bunting is readin' 'ard, so I 'ear, but he's relaxin' a little to-day. Just now I see a gentleman drop hout of 'is window, sir. And you're the third lot I've directed there. This is 'is staircase, gents, first floor. Thank you, sir, I'm sure. I'll drink your 'ealth."

And here Harcourt said he thought he'd leave

Bob. So Bob went up about six dark steps by himself, and then he stopped.

"Whoever he is, he's making a devil of a row," said Bob, pausing, "a devil of a row. I wonder if it is Bunting. I think Harcourt might have stayed. But he never did like fighting or rows."

He climbed up another step or two, and heard a mighty uproar.

"I think they must be having a boxing party," said Bob. And then he heard a door open on the landing above him.

"Confound you, sir! to the devil with you, sir!" said a voice that he certainly did not recognize. Then he heard a noise which was presently explained by the fact that Carteret Williams fell down the stairs, turning a crooked corner most wonderfully in company with a very large Liddell and Scott's Dictionary of that beautiful language, Greek.

"Oh, is that you, Mr. Williams?" asked Bob.

Williams appeared rather confused.

"Yes, Bob," he said, as he hugged the dictionary. "I — I think so."

"Why have you fallen down-stairs?" asked Bob.

"That damn groom threw me down," said Williams. "At least, he threw this book at me, and I came down."

CARTERET WILLIAMS, WAR CORRESPONDENT
He wrote with a red picturesqueness which was horribly attractive

"What, is it really Bunting?" roared Bob, eagerly.

"He says his name's Bunting," replied Williams. "But he's very difficult to handle."

"Oh, Tim can box," said Bob. "But is he our Bunting?"

"Whichever Bunting he is, you are welcome to him," said the enraged war correspondent.

"I must go up and see," said Bob. "Do you think he threw Mr. Plant and Mr. Gordon down, too? I met 'em just now, and they looked as if he had."

"I'm sure he's capable of it," said Williams, bitterly. "Here, take this book with you. I don't want it."

And Bob climbed up, hugging several pounds' weight of Greek with him. He stood at the door and listened, and heard a man inside snorting violently and slamming things about as if he was very much disturbed in his mind. Bob knocked at the door, and it was opened suddenly. The man who opened it was in deep shadow.

"It is — it is. No, it isn't," said Bob, quite aloud.

"Are you another of 'em?" asked the occupier of the rooms.

"Oh, it isn't," said Bob. And, choking down his disappointment, his politeness returned.

"Is this your Greek dictionary?" he asked, courteously. "I found it lying on Mr. Carteret Williams on the next landing, and he said he didn't want it."

The man named Bunting seized the dictionary, and then took Bob by the shoulder and led him in. Bob went like a lamb, for this Mr. Bunting was six feet high, about three feet across the chest, more or less, and had a grip like clip-hooks on a bale.

"Was that man named Williams?" he asked.

"Yes," said Bob.

"You know him?"

"Why, of course," said Bob. "I know 'em all."

"All I've thrown down-stairs this afternoon?"

"I think so," said Bob, modestly. "At least, I met Mr. Plant and Mr. Gordon, who looked very much as if they had fallen down-stairs. And I think the little gentleman you dropped out of the window on the grass must have been Mr. Austin de Vere."

"Oh," said Mr. Bunting, "sit down, boy, and look at me. Do I look mad?"

Bob looked at him and then at the room.

"The room looks mad," he replied. And it certainly did.

"That was the last one," said Mr. Bunting. "He was very troublesome."

"He's a war correspondent," said Bob. "But why is your name Bunting?"

"How the devil do I know?" asked the other, in reply. "Perhaps, as you seem to know them, you can explain what it all means?"

"I will try, sir, if you will tell me what occurred," said Bob.

"First of all," said the outraged member of All Saints, "the American person knocked and came in, and he said: 'Is your name Bunting?' And I said, 'Yes, confound you, for your infernal impudence, and what is yours?' And he said, 'What the devil do you mean by saying you have married her?' And I said I'd said nothing of the kind, and I said if he didn't get out in two shakes of a lamb's tail, I'd throw him out. And he was furious, and couldn't and wouldn't explain, so I did throw him out. And, as he tumbled down-stairs, he said he'd married her himself. And he went away, and I sat down to read Thucydides. He's under the sofa now somewhere. And then the Jew came, and he said: 'You mutht contradict the report of your being married to her at onth,' and that made me very cross, and I said I wouldn't, and that made

him very wild, so I said I *was* married to her just as he said he was — "

"Oh," said Bob, "and are you? Oh, dear, I am so confused! Are you really, really married to Pen?"

"I shall drop you out of the window in a minute," said Mr. Bunting. "I said it to annoy him, and it did, and he said I was a liar. So I opened the door and took him by the neck and dropped him down-stairs, and he howled awfully. And I said to him over the bannisters, 'I am married to her, and have been married for years to her, and she loves me very much, and we are going to acknowledge it as soon as I've taken my B. A.' And he went away holding his neck, and then the little man came in. Did you say he was a poet?"

"A very good poet, too," said Bob. "And I sell him bulldogs."

"Oh," said Mr. Bunting, blankly, "you do, do you? Why?"

"Because Pen thought they would do him good."

Mr. Bunting shook his head.

"Thicksides is lucid compared with this!" he murmured. "But patience, patience, and I shall construe it yet."

"And what did Mr. de Vere say?" asked Bob.

"The same thing. He stood there and said I

must contradict it. And he said of course it was very kind of her to have me educated, but that, if I had a spark of decency, I should know that a man who had once occupied the position I had couldn't possibly marry her. And, by the way, what position had I occupied in regard to her?"

"A groom," said Bob. "You were supposed to have been a groom."

"Dear me," said Mr. Bunting, "how interesting and remarkable. Still no light, no real light! And of course I said I had married her, and I asked him did he think I would desert the lady now? And he went scarlet. Why did he go scarlet do you think?"

"I know," said Bob, "it must have been on account of the baby!"

Mr. Bunting smote his forehead.

"So it must," he said. "I never thought of that. What a fearful complication! And then he, too, said I was a liar. So I took him by the collar and led him to the window, and I opened it and dropped him out. And then the one you call Williams came, and he also was indignant, and said I was to deny it, and I wouldn't of course. And then we fought, and the furniture was much disarranged and Thicksides went under the sofa, and at last I got him outside, and finished him with Liddell and Scott.

And now you know all! In your turn you can explain what it means. I beg you to do it, and then we will have some tea."

And Bob explained the whole story.

"You might have seen it in the papers," said Bob.

"I don't read 'em," said Bunting, "except to turn a *Times* leader into Greek. But it seems a complicated situation, doesn't it?"

"It is very complicated," sighed Bob, "and my grandmother is very ill about it. And now she will wonder if it's you, after all!"

"Dear me, so she will," said Bunting. "Have some tea."

They had tea, and Bob rose to go.

"Will you write to the *Times*, and say you haven't married her?" he asked.

"Certainly not," said Mr. Bunting. "Didn't I say to the others that I threw down-stairs that I *had* married her?"

"So you did," said Bob. "But of course you haven't?"

Bunting smiled.

"Good-bye. When you come to Oxford again, come and see me. I must crawl under the sofa now."

"What for?" asked Bob.

"For Thucydides, of course," replied Mr. Bunting.

And when Bob was in the train for London, he turned very pale.

"Good heavens!" he said, "how do I know it isn't this Bunting, after all?"

CHAPTER XIX.

After this, things by no means cleared up, as they should have done considering the amount of trouble that all the world took to find out the truth. Every one said something different from some one else. Bob gave horribly imaginative accounts of his adventures at Oxford, and threw out suggestions that Pen was really married to a Bunting, if not to Timothy Bunting. But when he appealed for corroboration to Gordon, that gentleman shuffled and prevaricated dreadfully, as he did not like to acknowledge he had been thrown down-stairs. There was a very curious scene, in which Gordon and Bob had the best part of a row before Titania, who came up to town to be near Dr. Lumsden Griff, who knew all about the left or right ventricle of her heart. As his jealous confrères said he knew nothing else, perhaps he did. However, that is by the way.

"Tell it me again, Robert," said Titania.

Bob told her again.

"He said he was married to her?"

"He said he said so to Mr. Plant and Mr. Gordon, and Williams and De Vere," said Bob, gloating over the details of the row. "And he slung 'em all down-stairs. He's about six feet six high, and as broad as a billiard-table, and as strong as three Sandows, I should say."

"I am much confused again," said Titania, plaintively. "I had come to the point where certain news of her marriage to a groom would have been a relief to me. Where are we now?"

As she asked, Gordon was announced. Bob rushed at him.

"I say, Mr. Gordon, tell us how he threw you down-stairs, and what he said?"

"He didn't throw me down-stairs," said Gordon, quite crossly. "I threw myself down — I mean I slipped."

"Tell us how you slipped, then, and why," said Bob.

But Gordon wouldn't.

"Oh, I say!" said Bob.

Titania begged Gordon to tell her.

"But then he told me he had married Pen," she said to herself. "What is the use of asking any one anything?"

"How did you find him?" asked Bob.

"I looked him up," said Gordon.

"Why did you look him up?"

"Because I wanted to find him out," returned Gordon, sulkily. "But I didn't come to be cross-examined by you, Bob."

In spite of the large sums of money which Gordon owed Bob, Bob was on the point of an explosion. But trouble was averted by Plant's entrance. Before he could say a word, a telegram was brought to Titania, and she read it at once and uttered dismal groans.

"What is it?" chorused the two men and Bob.

"It's from Penelope."

"Please read it out."

Bob read it for his grandmother.

"Am exceedingly displeased with latest reports and news. Contradict at once. Am not married to Bunting, who is much upset by report, and can hardly look me in the face. PENELOPE."

"Bunting is with her!" said Titania.

"Which Bunting?" asked Bob. "He — I mean the one at Oxford — told Mr. Gordon and Mr. de Vere that he was married to her."

Gordon groaned, and, seizing his hat, fled from the room. He came back again.

"Where does the wire come from?"

"From Spilsborough," said Bob. "Granny, I wonder if the bishop is in it."

Gordon groaned and went. And went a little too early, for another wire came. It was a very long one.

Titania looked at the signature first, and she sat up.

"It's from Penelope's husband," she cried.

"Who is he really?" shrieked Bob.

"It's signed Penelope's husband, I mean," said Titania, "and he seems very unhappy."

The telegram read:

"Am in great distress. Penelope is furious because told you confidence that was married to her. She has heard this, and has learnt that others, lying scoundrels, said they were, too. She says their noble conduct saved her, and will not speak at present, though holding out hopes of reconciliation later to her and infant, which is doing well, if I say nothing and do not fight with others, but do my duty, which I find hard under peculiar circumstances. Hence am precluded from confirming what I told you, and can only communicate anonymously, as Penelope threatens to have divorce or equivalent,

being headstrong, as you are aware, and I am in distress about it. Wire reply.

"PENELOPE'S HUSBAND."

"He's mad," said Titania. "How can I wire reply to a man I know nothing of?"

She turned to Plant.

"You told me in confidence, Mr. Plant. Did *you* send this?"

Plant turned all the colours of the rainbow.

"Yes," he said, desperately, and he bolted from the room and the house and disappeared, while Bob gasped, and Titania nodded her head in a most awe-inspiring manner.

"Get some telegraph forms," she said. And when Bob brought them, she dictated telegrams to all the horde in the diplomatic form of identic notes.

"Have received sad telegram signed Penelope's husband. Recognize under painful circumstances he cannot reveal himself. Am much composed and have given up hope. It appears it cannot be Bunting, though Bunting is with her. Contradict this; also the rumour that it is the Rajah of Jugpore.

"TITANIA GORING."

"Send them," she said, "and let me rest. I presume that the right one will get it. The only trouble is that six of the wrong ones will, too."

"Goby will go insane," said Bob. "I know he will. I can't see how this will end without murder."

And Titania laughed dreadfully. She laughed so queerly that Doctor Griff was sent for, and refused to allow her to see De Vere and Goby and Bramber and Gordon and Plant and Williams and Carew. The last turned up first in a hansom cab, with a large palette knife in his hand. He had forgotten to put it down. As hansom after hansom came up and discharged one furious lover after another at the steps of Titania's town house, it looked as if Bob's foreseen murder would occur there and then. It is possible that nothing but the timely arrival of Bradstock saved London from the desirable news of a murder in high life and Belgrave Square. He got hold of the men one by one, and sent them away. As they went, a telegraph boy came to the house with another telegram addressed to Titania.

"I shall open this, Bob," said Bradstock. It was another from Pen.

"Have just learnt that you and others have been trying to discover my whereabouts. If I am

pursued, I shall leave and go elsewhere. This is final. PENELOPE."

"From Spilsborough, Bob," said Bradstock.

"She's heard that I and Goby and Rivaulx and the others were there," said Bob. "Do you think the bishop knows where she is?"

"I wouldn't trust a bishop," said Bradstock. "I daresay he does. It is said that bishops steal Elzevirs and umbrellas, Bob. I think I shall go to Spilsborough myself. Have you seen the evening papers, Bob?"

Bob had seen none of them.

"Some say now that she is married to Jugpore, and others say it is a morganatic marriage to the mediatized Prince of Bodenstrau."

"Oh, I say, Pen will be mad," cried Bob. "Isn't he a real bad un?"

"The very worst," said Bradstock.

"And are you really going to Spilsborough, Lord Bradstock?"

"I really think so," said Bradstock. "I begin to think I must do something."

He stood pondering.

"May I come with you?"

Bradstock declined the honour.

"If I don't succeed, you may go again if you

like," he said. And that very afternoon he went to Liverpool Street and took the train for Spilsborough to call on the bishop.

"My dear Bradstock, I am delighted to see you," said his lordship. "I presume you, too, have come here about Penelope?"

"I have," said Bradstock, "every one does."

"Did young Bob tell you all about the peculiar occurrences which took place here only lately? They were quite remarkable."

Bradstock agreed that they were remarkable.

"A duel on the dean's grass, now! Who would have thought of that but a Frenchman? Have you seen the marquis lately, and that very agreeable financier, the American? I was much grieved not to be able to ask him to dinner, owing to his sudden departure. He showed considerable skill in grasping the essentials of the situation, for, when the marquis, who was literally foaming at the mouth, offered him the choice of swords in a violent but perfectly gentlemanly way, he chose both of them, and put them under his arm. It is not every one who could have displayed such readiness in preventing violence. One would not have expected it in an American, for I understand disorder and disturbances leading to bloodshed are quite common even in Washington."

"I have frequently seen most bloodthirsty duels behind the Capitol during the sessions of Congress," said Bradstock, gravely.

"Ah, so I understand," replied the bishop. "But is there no news of dear Penelope?"

"Come, bishop, let us be frank," said Bradstock. "Have you no idea whom she has married?"

The gentle bishop looked much surprised.

"I? My dear Bradstock, I haven't the least idea. But I gather that both the gentlemen I interrupted the other day claim to be her husband, to say nothing of many others whom I have not yet set eyes on."

"And you have no notion where she is?"

The bishop lifted his hands.

"I think she must be near this place," he said. "I consider there can be no doubt of that, owing to matters with which Bob made me acquainted. By the way, I think this young Bob a very remarkable boy, Bradstock."

"So do I, bishop," said Bradstock.

"A very remarkable boy. The dean, who saw very little of him, came to that conclusion. He said he would be an ornament to the House of Lords, or the biggest young rip that ever disgraced it."

"Your dean must be a clever man," said Bradstock.

"Do not call him *my* dean," replied the bishop. "He is the cathedral's dean, and very difficult to handle. However, he is said to be clever, and I dare say is clever, especially about grass and a choir and things material. But, as I was going on to say, I consider it quite easy to find out where Penelope is, provided we go about it skilfully. I cannot but remember that I christened her, and I still take an interest in her."

"How do you propose to discover her whereabouts?" asked Bradstock.

"She sends telegrams from our Spilsborough post-office, does she not?"

"Yes," said Bradstock.

"Then some one should watch the post-office for her messenger. It seems probable that you would know him, as she is not likely to confide in strangers. Who can say that the very man she has married does not send them?"

That was easily disposed of, for, to Bradstock's certain knowledge, all the lovers were in town when the last wires came.

"Well, I suggest you watch the post-office," said the bishop. "It is, I opine, a perfectly legitimate thing to do."

Bradstock objected that she mightn't send any more for weeks.

A brilliant idea struck the bishop.

"Send her one which requires an answer, Bradstock."

"Where to?" asked Bradstock.

"Tut, tut!" said the bishop, "how foolish of me. Stay, I have it. Put something in the *Times* which requires an answer."

"I will," said Bradstock.

"And send for young Bob to watch," said the bishop. "It is time that this scandal was stopped. I am exceedingly grieved with Penelope for getting married in a registrar's office. I will offer to marry her all over again in this very cathedral. And now you shall come and have lunch, and I will show you the swords given me by the marquis."

After lunch and an inspection of the trophies in the dining-room, Bradstock and the bishop drafted an advertisement for the *Times,* imploring Pen to telegraph to Bradstock, saying how she was, as there was a rumour afloat that she didn't feel well. This was sent by wire to town, and was accompanied in its flight by one to Bob, asking him to come up in a motor-car at once.

"I think," said the bishop, "that I should like to go in a motor-car. There must be something delightful in speeding through the country feeling that steel and petrol do not suffer any of the strain

that comes on horses. I shall ask young Bob to take me out."

"He will be delighted," said Bradstock. "I'm sure he will be delighted. They say he is an enterprising driver for his youth."

"I love enterprise," murmured the bishop. "I am surprised now to think of my own. I entered the Church meaning to be a bishop, and I am a bishop. I love enterprise. All curates seem full of it. Deans, I regret to say, are seldom vigorously enterprising. Archdeacons, too, have a tendency to take things easily, too easily."

"What do you think of the Higher Criticism?" asked Bradstock.

"Ha!" said the bishop, "ha! I think — oh, I think a great deal of it. That is, I think of it a great deal. I do not think all enterprise is praiseworthy. Would you like to know the dean?"

They spent the afternoon in the dean's cathedral, and walked on the dean's grass, and about six o'clock Bob rolled into the cathedral close in a fifteen-horse-power Daimler, and drew up in front of the bishop's palace.

"Have you found her out?" he demanded, eagerly, of Bradstock.

"No, but you shall," said Bradstock.

CHAPTER XX.

The bishop was very kind and amiable to Bob. Some people say that bishops are always kind and good to people who will be dukes by and by. One never knows what a duke can do for one later, and, of course, a bishop wants to be an archbishop. That is only natural: even a cardinal wants to be Pope, although he almost always says he is sorry he became one when he finds himself at the end of his tether. The bishop was a human being, but a nice one, and he really liked Bob, who suggested youth and strength and the future, all of them agreeable things to those who are not young and see their future behind them. So he talked to Bob almost as if he was one of the Bench of Bishops. He was familiar and jovial, and told some good stories of other bishops and even one of an archbishop. And he suggested to Bob that he rather wanted to see what a motor-car was like.

"There is a prejudice against them here," said the bishop. "Perhaps a natural prejudice among

those who own chickens and dogs and children. But Providence works in a mysterious way, and I should be the last to hasten to blame even the gentleman known as a road hog. I begin to perceive an unwonted sprightliness in the villagers as the elimination of the unfit, the rheumatic, the undecided, and the foolish proceeds apace. A young man, who told me that he had in the course of his career as an owner of cars killed nearly a thousand dogs, two thousand five hundred fowls, several aged persons, some idiots, and a policeman, said that he noticed nowadays an air of bright alertness in his immediate neighbourhood which was at once a pleasure and an encouragement. He asserted that the dogs who remained were of a higher type of intellect than the others; and he said that even the fowls now stood sideways in the road and used their natural advantage of looking both ways at once. There was, too, a great improvement in village children and even in policemen. Oh, yes, I think much may be said for the motor-car."

"I should very much like to take you out in one, my lord," said Bob.

The bishop smiled graciously.

"You shall, my boy, as soon as this matter of Penelope is settled. I shall greatly enjoy passing rapidly through the country. I think of buying one

for purposes of my pastoral visitations. Perhaps I may wake up some of my more somnolent clergy. I may even raise their general intellectual average, which is low, really low."

Bob's chauffeur put up at the Angel, but Bob himself had a bed in the palace, and dined in state with the bishop and Bradstock. They discussed Penelope all dinner-time, even before Ridley, for, as the bishop explained, Ridley took no interest in anything whatever but wine.

"I believe," said the bishop, with a chuckle, "that I might venture in his presence to advocate the disestablishment of the Church, or to give vent to heretical or even atheistical sentiments without his being aware that I was doing anything surprising, improper, or unusual. By all means, let us talk before Ridley. How do you think Bob should proceed, Bradstock?"

"He must stay in his car near, but not too near, the post-office," said Bradstock. "If Bob is properly goggled, this George Smith, whom we suppose to bring Pen's letters and telegrams, will not notice him. Shall you know him, Bob?"

"Rather," said Bob. "He walks very queerly. I could tell him a mile off."

"Very well, then," Bradstock continued, "when

he goes, you will follow him at a distance. He must not be lost sight of."

"I much underrate our young friend's enterprise if he loses him," said the bishop. "There are occasions when exceeding the legal limit becomes a duty, Bob."

"Rather," said Bob. "Oh, I'll do it."

They calculated that the *Times* would reach Pen about noon, as they believed she must be within twenty miles of Spilsborough. Bob accordingly arranged to take up his watch at the post-office before one o'clock.

"And perhaps to-morrow night the mystery will be solved," said the bishop. "It is really remarkable. I am not at all able to follow Penelope's mind."

Bob explained it to him.

"They ragged her," he said, — by "they" meaning Titania and others, — "and she loves peace and hates showing off, and she's as obstinate as a pig. And grandmother said she was to be married in Westminster Abbey by a bishop, and that put her back up. Oh, Pen's easy to understand, I think."

"You have no idea whom she has really married?" asked the bishop.

"Not much," said Bob. "I give it up. I've

thought it was all of 'em, and every one has done or said something that could be taken both ways. I was sure it was Goby, and then I was certain it was Bramber, and then I fairly knew it was Rivaulx, and I could have sworn it was Plant. And I'm very much worried by what occurred at Oxford. This new Bunting was very surprising."

The bishop had not heard of the new Bunting, and listened to Bob's story with great interest.

"The world is a very surprising place," said the bishop, with emphasis; "a very surprising place indeed. We do not need to go to Africa for new things. We are surrounded by the unexpected, by the marvellous. Bob's delightful story makes me feel that no one can reckon with certainty upon anything. I am half-inclined to think that this new Bunting must be a relation of the other Bunting, and that Penelope has met him, been struck with him, and has married him and lives in temporary retirement, while her husband struggles with Thucydides under a sofa. But after to-morrow we shall know more."

"I hope so," said Bradstock.

"I feel sure of it," said the bishop.

And Bob went to bed.

"Do you know, Bradstock," said the bishop, as he stroked his leg, which was a very reasonable leg

for a bishop, "I wonder you didn't think I had married Penelope."

"Good heavens!" said Bradstock, "have you?"

"Certainly not," replied the bishop, "but it is odd she should be near Spilsborough, isn't it?"

"She must be somewhere," said Bradstock, rather irritably. "Hang it! the girl must be somewhere."

"When you think of it, she must," said the bishop. "Yes, yes, you are right. Still, Spilsborough — yes, it's odd, but not remarkable. As you say, she must be somewhere. I hope it's not the Jew, Bradstock."

So did Bradstock.

"It looks very much as if she was ashamed of him. But I'm incapable of judging, not having been married," said the bishop.

"I've been married twice," said Bradstock, "and Pen is a woman, which means she resembles no other woman in any respect whatever as regards her ways, manners, customs, and thoughts."

"You say that coolly?" asked the bishop.

"Icily," replied Bradstock.

The bishop shook his head.

"You surprise me," said the bishop, "and I think I will go to bed."

Bradstock went to bed, too.

"I shouldn't be surprised if she had married the bishop and was under this roof now," said Bradstock. "Nothing would surprise me unless I discover she's married to Rivaulx or Bramber. I don't think I should mind either of 'em."

And next day at half-past twelve Bob and his chauffeur took up a position near the post-office. As Geordie Smith knew Bradstock, he kept quietly at the palace. But the interested bishop who had not married Penelope kept bustling about the neighbourhood in quite an excitement.

"I wish I was coming with you, Bob."

"Oh, do!" said Bob.

"I almost think it would be advisable," said the bishop. "What I said would have weight with Penelope, I believe."

"I rather wish you'd come," cried Bob. "It would be fun, and you said you'd like to go in a motor-car."

"So I did," said the bishop, "but I've never been in one. No one has seen me in one. I fear a crowd would assemble."

"At any rate, my lord, you might get in and sit down a minute."

The bishop looked around.

"I really think I will," he said. And he entered the car.

"This is really comfortable, Bob, very comfortable, quite like an armchair. Is your driver a good one?"

"A ripper," said Bob. "The best they have where I got the car. It's not mine, but when I get all the money that Gordon owes me, I'll buy one."

The chauffeur got down and did something inexplicable to the machinery with a spanner. And the spanner broke.

"I'll just run across and get a new one, sir," said the chauffeur.

"It's getting late," said Bob. "Don't be long, and before you go start her up."

The driver set her going, and the bishop caught hold of Bob.

"You're not off? This is very surprising. It makes a very curious noise."

"There won't be any to speak of when we get her moving," said Bob. "You see the engine is going, and when we like we can start at once."

He was happy, bright, and eager.

"There's a motor-car coming," whispered the bishop.

Bob jumped.

"I say, it's yellow like Pen's big new one," he said. And the car stopped in front of the post-

office ten yards away. Bob grabbed the bishop's arm.

"That's Geordie Smith," he said. "That's Geordie getting out. I could tell his legs a mile off. Where's my man?"

But the man didn't come, and Geordie was back in his car. He went off sweetly.

"The north road," said Bob. "I'm sure he'll take it. He's going quick. We can't wait for my man."

He grabbed the steering-wheel, shifted the lever, and the car moved off on the first speed.

"I'll — I'll go a little way with you," said the bishop.

"You'll have to unless you jump," replied Bob. "I'll keep in sight if I die for it."

This encouraged the bishop very much, of course, and it is possible that he might have jumped if he had not caught sight of the dean and a minor canon, who were staring hard at him with their mouths as wide open as the grotesque muzzle of a Gothic gargoyle.

"I'll not jump," said the bishop, and he waved his hand to Mr. Dean. "No, I'll not jump before the dean if I die for it."

Before he knew it, they were out on the road, and the dust of the yellow car in front was like

the pillar of smoke to the Hebrews in the desert. Bob let her out to the second speed, and the bishop gasped.

"We go very quick," he said.

"Oh, not at all," replied Bob. "I don't want to go fast. If Geordie thinks he's being followed, he'll go sixty miles an hour, and I don't think I can do more than forty-five in this."

"Can't you?" asked the bishop. "I'm almost glad you can't."

"Is this the great north road?" asked Bob.

"No," said the bishop, "it's the road to Crowland and Spalding. I've often driven on it, but never so fast as this."

Geordie's car drew ahead, and Bob put his car on the third speed.

"Bob!" cried the bishop, as he clutched the sides of his seat. "Bob!"

"Yes?"

"Isn't this an illegal speed?"

"Rather," said Bob.

"I cannot aid and abet you in going at it, then," said the bishop, as firmly as he could. "I must request you to be legal."

Bob kept his eyes ahead.

"Please don't talk," he roared, "or I shall have

an accident. You must remember I'm not at all experienced."

What could the poor bishop do? He groaned and sat very tight indeed, and, seeing the landscape eaten up by this monster at the rate of thirty miles an hour, came to the conclusion that there was nothing stable in the universe, not even theology. And about a mile ahead of them rose a pillar of dust.

"This is a remarkable situation," thought the bishop; "a situation which requires some firmness of mind. I am a bishop, and I am no better than half my clergy who break the law regularly. This must be nearly a hundred miles an hour! I wish, I almost wish Penelope had died soon after I christened her. This Bob is an infernal young ruffian; his manner is not respectful. I should like to cane him. But how can I stop him? I do not understand these strange brass things. I could as soon play the big organ in the cathedral that I wish I was in. If I pull Bob he will have an accident. If I speak to him, I may divert his attention — oh!"

They executed a fowl which had not learnt to stand sideways, and slammed through a village, scattering several ancient inhabitants who were enjoying a gossip in the middle of the road. As a matter of fact, they were damning Geordie Smith in heaps when the pursuing Bob fell upon them.

They passed a church, and the bishop saw a clergyman staring over the wall. The village fell into the category of things which had been and slid away behind them.

"We are stopping still and the world slides," said the bishop, "but that was Griggs, I know, and he knew me. He has eyes like a hawk's. I am much surprised at myself. I have seventeen engagements this afternoon. Ridley will be alarmed. The dean — oh!"

They slammed a barking dog into the middle of the week after next.

"That was a near shave," roared Bob, exulting. "I've seen a smaller dog than that capsize a bigger car than this!"

"May I speak now?" implored the bishop.

"Righto," said Bob. "Here's a good straight bit. What is it?"

He was the superior: he was a big bird and the bishop was a beetle. He was the head master; his lordship of the see of Spilsborough was a new boy. The bishop felt small, terrified, amazed, humiliated.

"Are we going a hundred miles an hour?" asked the bishop.

"Rot!" said Bob, "we're only doing about thirty."

They scorched through quiet Crowland.

"Please put me down," implored the humble bishop.

"I can't stop," said Bob. "I'm afraid he's getting ahead. Sit tight, bishop, I'm going faster now."

"You mustn't, you can't," said the bishop.

Bob stooped for an answer and turned on the fourth speed. The bishop felt the machine sailing underneath him. He fell back and lost all ordinary consciousness.

"It *is* true," said his mind deep inside him; "it *is* true that all things are illusion! I have sometimes suspected it. We are a mode of motion; we are affections of the ether. I believe Professor Osborne Reynolds is right. I am a kind of vortex spinning in piled grains of ether. Bob is a vortex. We are in a vortex. We are straws in ether; we are shadows. I have a real non-existent pain in my real imaginary non-existent stomach. I am not alive and I am not dead. I am brave; I am a coward; I am a bishop. This is very wonderful. I shall preach about it when I return to earth. Is that a hedge? Did I see a cow? — a strange, elongated, horned, lowing, permanent, impermanent possibility of sensation and milk in a field made of matter, which is energy, which is an illusion. I become calm; motion is relative. I almost enjoy

it. I become a Hegelian. I see that being equals non-being; that pain becomes pleasure if you only have enough of it. I no longer pity those who suffer sufficiently. There is apparently too little pain in the universe. Torquemada did his best to remedy it. Oh, was that a dog? I quite enjoy myself. I wonder if he can go faster. If he can, I wish he would. We are going slow, too slow!"

And, as Geordie's dust showed up much nearer, Bob put his car again at the third speed, and the bishop gasped.

"How do you like it?" asked Bob, as they spun through Spalding.

The bishop's face was a fine glowing crimson; his bloodshot eyes glittered like opals; he was intoxicated with movement and with new lights on philosophy.

"I — I should like to go a thousand miles an hour at night," said the bishop. "I think it is wonderful, Bob. Are you Bob, and I a bishop? Where is Spilsborough? Is there a Spilsborough?"

"Steady on!" said Bob. "I say, you're excited!"

"I am," replied the bishop. "I am excited; I feel peculiar. I think I can originate a new philosophy. Why are we doing this?"

"We are trying to find out where Penelope is," said Bob.

"Penelope, Penelope," said the bishop. "Penelope is a vortex. Yes, she is a vortex. Men and women are vortices. I shall study mathematics and apply it to theology."

"Hello!" said Bob, and he stopped almost dead. For Geordie's dust had suddenly died down.

"I'll bet he has a puncture," said Bob. And the bishop sighed and stared about him, as if he were just awakened.

"Where are we?" he asked.

"Blessed if I know," said Bob. "But you ought to know."

"I don't," said the bishop. And he got out and stood on the dusty road. He reeled, and the dean would have said he was intoxicated. And so he was.

"Geordie's off again," said Bob. "Come, jump in."

"I won't," said the bishop. "Certainly I won't. That machine is a kind of devil. It undermines the strongest convictions. I am afraid of it. I shall have to resign my bishopric if I ride another mile."

"Oh, rot!" said Bob. "Aren't you coming? I can't wait."

"Take the devilish thing away," cried the bishop.

"Anathema maranatha and all the rest of it!"

Without another word, Bob pulled the lever and sailed off up the road, leaving a trail of petrol vapour behind him.

"Mentally and physically, I don't know where I am," said the bishop. "I don't know who I am, either. From my clothes I conclude I am a bishop, but to come to that conclusion I have to assume that I have the right to wear them. I have had a remarkable experience. Yes, I am a bishop. This is the earth and very dusty. It is hot, and I am miles from anywhere."

He looked up the road and saw a far cloud of dust.

"Under that dust is Bob," said the bishop. "As I said, Penelope is a vortex. Everything is much more remarkable than I thought, much more remarkable. I shall write to the professor to discover what he means. It is dreadful that what may be called a mere physical experience should incline me to look on some of my fellow bishops and the higher criticism with a more lenient eye. I don't see how any dogma *can* survive a hundred miles an hour. But Bob has not treated me altogether well. He plumps me down somewhere between Spalding and Spilsby or Boston or some other dreadful locality under the ghostly influence of my

brother of Lincoln, and disappears in dust and smell. He was distinctly disrespectful. He said, 'Sit down, bishop,' in a very authoritative manner. He told me I was excited. I own I was, but I resented being told so by a boy, because he was a boy, or was it because I am a bishop? An unaccustomed bishop in a motor-car is plainly nobody compared with an experienced boy in one. I wish Penelope was a sensible person, or that I had never known her, or that she hadn't been born! I wonder what I am to do. I must walk; I may be overtaken by a cart and get a ride in one. I anticipate much talk in Spilsborough about this. I wonder what Ridley will say. Ridley is a stoic; perhaps he will say nothing. I wish I was near Ridley; I am thirsty. This road is dusty. It also appears long and interminable. I am as dry as convocation. I much resent Bob's treatment of me. I wish Bradstock was here, and I was where Bradstock is. Bradstock is in my library, in my chair, with a book in his hand and a whiskey and soda by his side. He takes things with great calmness. I wish he was here to take this with calmness."

And he walked south for three hours and got back to Spalding, and there took a train for Spilsborough.

CHAPTER XXI.

"I DON'T think I quite understand the bishop," said Bob, as he left the dignitary of the Church stranded long miles from anywhere. "He looked very queer. But I suppose they're made bishops because they are queer, unless it's on account of their legs. I can understand the gaiters, but the apron licks me. I'll ask him about it some day. But I wonder where we are, and how much longer Geordie will go on. It's luck I've had no puncture and no breakdown. I thought it was all up when I sent that dog over the hedge. He did fly. I wonder whether any bobbies have spotted my number. I don't care. Gordon owes me a lot of money by now. What's thirty-two times two thousand odd? Oh, I can't remember. I'm getting rather tired."

But he stuck to Geordie like a burr to a sheep, and between the two of them they stirred up more ancient peace and the haunts of it than any other two cars in the United Kingdom. They fairly

bounded through sleepy old Boston, and a policeman, waked up from sleep by Geordie, was wide-awake enough by the time Bob came through to call on him to stop.

"I wouldn't stop for an army of policemen," said Bob, recklessly. "I don't care. I'll catch Geordie if I die for it. Gordon will pay my fines. I wonder how the bishop is. This is the Spilsby road, is it? I wonder whether Pen's at Spilsby? Will she be very cross with me? Oh, that was a hen! I *do* think hens shouldn't be allowed in a road."

A dog stood in the middle of the way and barked. In the middle of his second bark, the front wheel caught him. He ended his bark in the ditch, and was very dreamy about the whole affair for some time afterward.

"That was a dog," said Bob. "I *do* think dogs shouldn't be allowed in a road."

He missed a horse by a hairbreadth a mile farther on, and felt very cross. He said horses shouldn't be allowed in a road. He said the same of carts and of a carriage, of children and agricultural labourers. They were so slow. For now Geordie was going pretty fast, and Bob had to go on the fourth speed, which is highly illegal and wicked and very dangerous. He had never enjoyed

himself so much before, and he was undoubtedly the happiest boy in the three kingdoms.

"Geordie doesn't know I'm after him," he said. "I'll bet he's riding along easy. That car of Pen's can go like lightning if he lets her out. He will be mad when I come up."

And suddenly he perceived down a long, white road that Geordie was going more slowly.

"This must be Spilsby," said Bob. He saw Geordie's dust go off at a right angle toward the right.

"I've done it," said the exultant boy. "We must be near Pen's now."

For to turn to the right in the neighbourhood of Spilsby means to go toward the North Sea.

Bob ran into Spilsby quite meekly on the second speed, and turned after Geordie. A mile farther on, Bob saw a house in some trees, and all of a sudden there was no more dust from Geordie's car. Bob pulled up in the middle of the road.

"By Jove, I've done it, I know," said Bob, "and now I feel a bit nervous. I wonder what Pen will say, and whether her husband is there, and what the kid's like. Well, here's for it! She can't do more than eat me."

And he drove on till he came to the house, which was an ivy-covered building like a square barrack,

and would have been hideous without its creepers. There was a moat around it and big elms hid it from a distance. The gate was open, and by the front door stood Geordie and his car. Bob gave a view-halloo, and, twisting through the gate, came to a standstill alongside Pen's big yellow racer.

And Penelope herself came to the door, and saw not only Geordie, whom she recognized simply by the fact that he was in a car she knew, but an undistinguishable stranger also.

"Oh!" said Bob.

"Eh?" said Geordie.

"Who—" said Penelope.

And Bob staggered out of his machine, and fairly reeled when he stood upright. He had no notion that no one, not even Titania, could have recognized him. He forgot his goggles, and he forgot he was so dusty that one might have planted cabbages on his cheeks. He did not know that he weighed several pounds more than usual, owing to the amount of Lincolnshire that he carried on him. He had no idea that he was awful, hideous, a goggled, dirty portent. He smiled, and the dirt cracked upon him, and Penelope shrank back.

"Oh, I say, Pen, are you mad with me?" he asked.

And Penelope shrieked and ran to him, and, fall-

ing upon him, embraced him with horrible results to her clothes.

"Oh, Bob, Bob, is it you?" she cried.

"It's me, right enough," said Bob. "I say, can I have a drink? I'm dying! Am I dusty? Yes, so I am. Oh, Pen, it's come off on you! I say, I do want a drink. It's such a warm day, and Geordie would go so fast. I followed Geordie."

Geordie looked horribly disgusted, but neither Pen nor Bob paid the least attention to him.

"Followed up by a boy," groaned Geordie, "and in that thing!"

He regarded the mean fifteen-horse-power concern with great contempt. "Well, I'm blessed!"

"Oh, come in, Bob, dear Bob," said Pen.

"Are you glad to see me?"

"Oh, I've been dying to see you."

"Upon your honour?" asked Bob.

"Yes, yes," said Penelope. "I want to ask you so much, and I've got so much to say. But tell me, tell me quick. Does any one else know where I am?"

Bob shook dust out of his head.

"Not a soul, unless it's the bishop," he replied.

"What bishop?"

"The Bishop of Spilsborough," replied Bob. "I left him on the road."

"Oh!" gasped Pen, "is he following you?"

"Not much," said Bob. "He got scared and got out and wouldn't get in again, and he talked such rot I thought he was mad, for a bishop, so I left him, and suppose he's walking home again."

Pen almost shook him.

"But what was he doing with you?"

"He wanted to come part of the way in my car, so I let him, and he was awfully funky. I don't think much of bishops if they're all like him, though he did stop Plant and Rivaulx fighting with swords in the cathedral."

"Fighting? with swords? Oh, what—" said Penelope.

"To be sure, I forgot you very likely didn't know. I'll tell you by and by. Bradstock's at Spilsborough. Where's my drink, Pen? I say, did you hear of Mr. Bunting at Oxford? That was fun. He threw De Vere out of the window, and knocked Carteret Williams down with Liddell and Scott."

"What Mr. Bunting?"

"They thought he was Timothy Bunting, but he wasn't. I had tea with him afterward. I'll tell you by and by. Do you know grandmother had fits about it all?"

Penelope knew nothing, or very little, and as the

results of her fatal conduct were thus revealed to her in dreadful incomplete chunks, her heart almost failed her and she half-forgot her own terrible troubles.

"Am I mad, or is Bob?" she asked. "Oh, the bishop and Guardy and duels and fits and Mr. Bunting and windows and Liddell and Bob having tea!"

She ran for a drink herself, and poured it over Bob in her eagerness for more news.

"I say, Pen, be careful! That went down my neck," said Bob, "and outside it, too. I say, who've you married? Tell me. Where's the kid? May I see it? I say, Pen, you look splendid, but sad somehow and rather worried. I feel better now. I don't mind what went down outside. I'll have a bath soon. Where's the kid? They *do* talk a lot about it in town. They say, some of 'em, that you've married the Rajah of Jugpore, the little beast, and that the baby is black, or partly black. Is it? I know it isn't."

"Oh, oh!" said Pen, "how horrible of them!"

She rushed at the bell, and when the servant came she commanded the instant appearance of the baby and the nurse.

"You know they said you married Timothy Bunting," said Bob.

Penelope flushed crimson.

"It was wicked of them."

"That beast Weekes told granny you had. She said she knew it. That's how I had tea with Mr. Bunting at Oxford, after he'd chucked Plant and Gordon down-stairs. They were sick. Oh, oh! is this the kid?"

Pen took the precious infant in her arms, and told the nurse she might go and have tea. When she had disappeared, Pen burst into tears.

"He's — he's all I've got," she said, sobbing.

Bob started.

"I say, what do you mean? You don't mean you aren't married at all?"

"No, no," said Penelope. "I mean — oh, it's terrible! Oh, baby, I love you!"

She kissed the baby, who was certainly a very fine baby, and wept again. Bob inspected the boy with great interest.

"I say, I rather think it's like Plant," he said.

Pen gasped.

"But in this light, it's rather like Gordon."

"Oh!" said Penelope.

"And its forehead is like De Vere's a little. I say, won't you tell me who you've married?"

Penelope hugged the baby and howled.

"I can't, I can't. We've q-quarrelled," she said, "and he's furious, and I'm f-furious with him."

"Why?" asked Bob, still inspecting the baby for signs of his male parentage, "why? Oh, I say, sideways he reminds me of Williams and Rivaulx, and upside down he's a little like Carew and Goby. But why have you quarrelled, Pen?"

Pen explained with tears how it had happened.

"You see, I said he wasn't to tell," she said. "And he went to your grandmother and told!"

"So did all the rest," said Bob, "and that was where granny got very confused. I listened. I know it was a sneak thing to do, but I was thinking of your interests, and she said to the last of 'em: 'I know you've come to say you've married dear Penelope.' It was very pathetic, Pen. I never thought granny could be pathetic before. She usually makes me pathetic instead, or she used to. But was he one of 'em?"

"He was," sniffed Pen, "and he broke his solemn oath. The others were noble. I sent them telegrams to say they were noble."

"That's why they all went to Spilsborough, where you sent the telegrams from," said Bob, "and that's why Plant and Rivaulx fought with swords under the cathedral, till the bishop and the dean stopped them. I tell you the dean *was* mad."

"Oh, dear, dear!" said Penelope. "I wish they wouldn't. Did they hurt each other?"

"Not much, I think," replied Bob. "I didn't see any blood. But when I told 'em you'd married Timothy Bunting, Rivaulx lay on the grass and tried to bite it and howled dreadfully."

"Poor marquis!" said Pen. "But why did you tell them so dreadful a story?"

Bob shook his head.

"I'm sorry, Pen, but I believed it. Weekes said she *knew,* and granny had fits. There's something about fits that makes you believe almost anything. But you haven't told me who it is. I say, with the light sideways on that baby, he reminds me of Bramber. But who is it?"

"We've p-parted," said Penelope. "He came and said he'd told, and I was very f-furious, and we had a r-row. And he was so cross and mad, because without me he couldn't prove it. For we were married in other names, and I wrote my name in another handwriting, and I said I would deny it. And he flew into a passion and into a motor-car and went away. And I've only my p-pride and b-baby left. And I'm so sorry for every one. And how did you find me?"

Bob told her how he had done it, and told her of Bradstock's advertisement, and told her about the bishop, and more about Mr. Bunting of All Saints, Oxford, who was the strongest man he had

ever seen. Carteret Williams was nothing in his hands.

"And now I've told you everything, won't you tell me who it is?"

"No," said poor Penelope; "it would humiliate me to tell now, and I won't."

"But they must know here," said Bob.

"Only three," replied Penelope. "Miss Mackarness and Geordie Smith and Timothy. And Timothy was so unhappy when he heard he had married me that I sent him away to Upwell, where there are more horses. But he's back now. And Miss Mackarness and Geordie Smith have sworn not to tell. And I expect you not to ask them."

Bob snorted a little at this.

"Oh, all right, but I shall have to say where you are when I go back to Spilsborough."

"Oh, you won't," said Pen.

"I must," said Bob. "Bradstock is terribly worried about it now, and thinks you've treated him badly, and the bishop is very curious, and he asks questions in a way that it's difficult not to answer somehow. And besides there's granny and all the rest. I say, do you know Gordon has been speculating for me, and has made seventy thousand pounds for me?"

"You don't say so?" cried Pen.

"I think it must be Gordon," said Bob. "When the shadow's on that kid, he looks rather like Gordon, if you can think of Gordon as a baby, which is hard. But when I'm a duke, I shall rebuild Goring and pay off some of the mortgages. Whoever you've married, I'm very grateful to you, Pen, about Gordon and De Vere. De Vere bought the spotted dog I told you of. I found Goby weeping with Ethel. That made me think it wasn't him. But now you say you've quarrelled with him, I'm not sure again. I say, I'm very sleepy. May I stay to-night?"

"Of course," said Penelope. And then a brilliant idea struck her.

"Bob, you do love me, don't you?"

"What rot! of course," said Bob.

"Then stay here altogether for a time," said Pen.

"By Jove, what fun!" cried Bob. "I'll send 'em a wire, and I will. Can Geordie go somewhere else but Spilsborough and send one?"

"Certainly," said Penelope. And it was arranged that Geordie should go to Lincoln to send it from there. This is the telegram Bob sent to Lord Bradstock:

"I have found Penelope. She won't say who it is because she has quarrelled with him, and she won't let me come back yet. I will take care of her.

Tell grandmother and Guthrie. She quarrelled with him because he said he was married to her. But the baby is not black."

And Bradstock swore. The bishop was too tired to swear, perhaps, but he was very cross. So were all the others, including her husband.

CHAPTER XXII.

They had relied greatly upon Bob. The bishop, though rather bitter on the subject of Bob, tried to be fair to him, and said he was a very promising boy.

"I think it most remarkable," said his lordship, when his fine but tired legs were beneath the mahogany once more, "that he should be able to drive these dreadful machines with such skill. He missed a great many things that he might have hit, but, as he said, he 'boosted' one dog over a hedge in a most skilful way. He said 'boosted,' a very peculiar word. I must write to Doctor Murray about it. But I do not think he has been brought up with care. He was not altogether respectful to me, Bradstock."

"I much regret it," said Bradstock, "but what can you expect at Goring? On the whole, his manners are not so bad. Perhaps you annoyed him. He does not like being annoyed."

"Indeed," said the bishop, "indeed! Well, I

may have worried him in a way that I do not quite understand. But I have to own that for a boy to put his hand on my shoulder and say, 'Sit down, bishop,' in a most authoritative way, made me a little cross. And when I refused to enter the motor-car again, I think he might have given me more time to reflect on the fact that I was a very long way from anywhere. He was very short and peremptory with me. It was most curious, and I regret I did not go on with him, for I am extremely anxious to put an end to this scandal. One never knows what will happen. The duel in the moonlight under the cathedral was most remarkable. I wonder when Bob will return."

"So do I," said Bradstock, drily.

"Why do you say so in that tone?" asked the bishop.

"Because I doubt whether he will return at all if he finds Penelope," replied Bradstock.

"Good heavens!" cried the bishop, "but he went for the very purpose of discovering her."

"You don't know Pen," said Bradstock, "and he worships her. If she doesn't want to be discovered, she will keep him. I am certain of it."

This showed that Bradstock, though a silent peer, was a very sensible one. The bishop frowned and smote the table.

"I shall be extremely angry with Bob if you turn out to be right," he said, firmly. "I shall be extremely angry with him."

"Much he will care about that," said Bradstock. "You ought to have gone on with him."

"I believe I ought to have done so. Yes, you are right, Bradstock; it was an error of judgment. I was a coward. I was afraid to die. I did not like the idea of being 'boosted' over a hedge. I am ashamed of myself."

"Never mind," said Bradstock, consolingly, "I have seen heroes quail in a motor-car. I myself have quailed in one."

The bishop shook his head.

"Nevertheless, I blame myself. I ought not to have been afraid, even though I felt peculiar and unwonted sensations in my gaiters," he murmured.

He smote the table again.

"I will make amends, Bradstock. I will devote myself to the task of finding Penelope at any speed that is necessary. I cannot quite reconcile myself to the notion that I am a coward. I will find her if Bob deceives us."

"You can't," said Bradstock, rather gloomily.

"I can, I will," said the bishop. "I will use my brains."

It was a happy thought. The bishop mused.

There was a knock at the outer door. It was a double, a telegraphic knock.

"From the duchess?" asked the bishop.

"From Bob, or I am a bishop," said the peer.

And Ridley gave him a telegram. Bradstock read it slowly, lifted his eyebrows, rubbed his handsome white head, and handed it to the bishop.

"From Bob, bishop, a very remarkable Bobbish document."

The bishop read it.

"It certainly is a remarkable document, a very remarkable document, indeed," said his lordship. "I see it was handed in at Lincoln. She won't say who it is because she has quarrelled with him. With her husband, that is to say. She will not let Bob come back. She quarrelled with *him* because he said he was married to *her*. Very remarkable! Somewhat confusing. But it is a relief to hear that the baby is not black, Bradstock."

Bradstock was pessimistic.

"It may be half-black," he said, mournfully.

"Which half?" asked the bishop, with alarm. "If it is, I hope it will not be the top half."

"Absurd!" said Bradstock. "I mean it may be dun or yellowish."

"Let us trust not," replied the bishop. "I am inclined to think Bob would have said it was not

very black if it had been at all coloured. I think we may dismiss the Jugpore legend."

"I trust we may," said Bradstock.

"I have an idea," said the bishop. "I have a luminous idea. Let us go to the library."

They adjourned to the library, and Bradstock lighted a cigar.

"What is your idea?" he asked.

"I will tell you in a few minutes," said the bishop, as he laid a big atlas upon his table. Bradstock watched him curiously. The bishop opened the atlas and laid a flat ruler on it. He shifted it once or twice, nodded his head, said "Ah!" and nodded it again.

"I believe I have it," said the bishop. "It will be worth trying, at any rate."

"What is it?" asked Bradstock.

"Come and look at the atlas," said the bishop, and Bradstock did as he was asked.

The bishop put his finger-tips together and began:

"Bob was following this person named Smith, and went north, did he not? Let us say north. I believe it is technically north by east. He put me out, or, to be fair even to Bob, I got out and was asked to return very casually, north of Spalding in the Boston road, miles from anywhere. This

Smith was going back to Penelope. For while Bob and I were away, you got her telegram dated Spilsborough, sent to London and re-telegraphed to you here, saying that she was well, in reply to your *Times* advertisement. Obviously, Penelope lives somewhere north of the spot where Bob left me without time for argument. Do you follow me?"

"Certainly," said Bradstock. "It is all as clear as quaternions."

"Now we get this very remarkable document from Lincoln."

"We do, bishop."

"It is obvious she doesn't live at Lincoln. She has sent this very fast Smith there to send off Bob's telegram. Is that not so?"

"Of course," said Bradstock.

"Let us imagine that Lincoln is nearly as far from where she is as Spilsborough is."

"Let us imagine it," said Bradstock. "I am willing to imagine it."

"What conclusion do you draw?" asked the bishop.

Bradstock shook his head.

"Really, Bradstock," said the bishop, "I am surprised at you. If she is between Spalding and Lough, as I'm sure she is, an equal distance from her to Lincoln and from her to Spilsborough would

place her about Boston, or perhaps farther north. Now, if on inquiry we find she is not near Boston, she must be near a decent road fit for motor-cars to Lincoln. Do you follow me?"

"I do," said Bradstock.

"Then if she is not near Boston, where is she?"

Bradstock studied the map.

"I should say Burgh, or Warnfleet, or Spilsby."

"Right," said the bishop. "I am almost sure of it. For if she had been farther north, she would not have chosen Spilsborough to telegraph from in the first instance. What do you say to that?"

"I say that I am not surprised that you are a bishop, though I may wonder why you are in the Church," said Bradstock.

"What do you mean by that, Bradstock?" asked his lordship.

"Nothing, nothing at all," replied Bradstock, hastily. "I agree with you. What shall we do?"

The bishop eyed him a little doubtfully, but returned to his muttons.

"I want to bowl out Bob," he said.

"A bishop is a human being, after all," thought Bradstock.

"He might have reasoned with me," said the bishop. "I am quite free the day after to-morrow, and we will go to Boston and make inquiries. If

they fail, we will try Warnfleet and Spilsby and Burgh."

"We will," said Bradstock. "I think this idea of yours exceedingly clever, bishop."

"You do?"

"Certain, I do."

"I forgive your recent gibe," said the bishop. "It was clearer than quaternions to me, and much clearer than Bob's rudeness, which I continue to find inexplicable. And now I think the duchess should be informed of his telegram. It will console her, I am sure, to learn that this fatherless infant is not black."

"Not *very* black," insisted Bradstock.

And the bishop sent a wire to Titania, saying that Bob had disappeared into space, but had telegraphed saying that he had found Penelope with a normal infant.

"After all, he only said it wasn't black," sighed Bradstock.

But the bishop would not listen to him. So he went out and sent a wire to Titania himself.

"I should like to make Bob black and blue," the bishop said. For his legs still ached.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Next morning the bishop had an hysteric telegram from Titania. It was obscure and of great length:

"Do not understand anything, but have hopes. Your telegram arrived before Augustin's. You say normal; he says Robert's words do not convey anything but negation of extreme blackness. Jugpore going back to India, owing to scandalous conduct at music-hall. India Office furious. Secretary of State in bed. Rumour now affirms infant not Penelope's. Says adopted. Have just seen Plant and Gordon and Carteret Williams, and expect the others. They say they knew it all the time. Say they gave her the infant. Am confused, but hope you and Augustin will clear up details and find Penelope. Am exceedingly vexed with Robert. De Vere has just come, weeps, but seems pleased. Bramber wires wishes to see me, but father is ill at Pulborough, doctors (three) giving up hope. Goby just left. Will come to Spilsborough myself

to-day if doctor permits, owing to palpitations. Keep me informed."

"Dear me!" said the bishop, "this seems quite a new development, a very surprising one. But I am sorry to see, Bradstock, that you sent another telegram without consulting me."

"I didn't want you to give her too much hope," replied Bradstock. "You were so certain. Your telegram was not logical. What is not black is not necessarily white, for not-black may be green, or blue, or magenta."

"You are a pessimist," said the bishop. "However, I forgive you. What surprises me is this adoption story. I don't believe it."

Bradstock was fractious.

"Well, I don't know, bishop. She always said if she had none of her own she would adopt one."

"Nonsense!" said the bishop.

"It is not nonsense," said Bradstock.

"Why don't you say they are twins?" demanded the bishop.

"What are twins?"

"It," said the bishop. "Really, Bradstock, don't you see you are unreasonable? You will believe anything."

"And this from a bishop," murmured Bradstock. "Why should I say it was twins?"

"If she adopted one, she might adopt two," said the bishop.

"That is ridiculous. I never heard of twins being adopted," cried Bradstock. "Besides, Bob says 'the baby.'"

"Well, well," said the bishop, "do not let us argue passionately about a detail."

"I do not see that twins can be called a detail," said Bradstock, crossly.

"Very well, call them what you like," said the bishop, hastily. "But I expect the duchess will be here any moment."

Bradstock said he shouldn't wonder if she was.

"She will insist on coming with us to-morrow," he said.

The bishop started.

"Bradstock, we will go to-day. I will put off my business and go at once. The duchess is a remarkable woman, but she talks too much."

And such was his lordship's energy that they started by train for Boston in less than half an hour.

"I rather enjoy this," said the bishop. "This is an unusual event in a life like mine, Bradstock. I wonder whether we shall succeed, and I wonder what the young rascal will say when he sees me. He will be rather abashed, I fancy."

"Do you fancy that?" asked Bradstock. "Is imagination necessary, by the way, for the clerical or episcopal life?"

"It is highly necessary, but rare," said the bishop.

"So I should imagine," said Bradstock.

"What do you mean by that?" asked the bishop, a little warmly.

Bradstock said he meant nothing by it, except that he was glad it was necessary. Nevertheless, the bishop looked at him sternly for some minutes, and he felt rather uncomfortable.

"I should not be surprised if Titania was now at the palace," he said, to change the conversation.

"Ridley and my housekeeper must deal with her," said the bishop. "Ridley deals with every one calmly. Kings and curates come equally and easily within his powers. Ridley may most distinctly be called an adequate butler. He will offer her my best spare bedroom, or arrange for her sojourn at the Grand. I do not believe an archbishop in a fit would throw Ridley off his balance. I rather wondered whether it would disturb him to see me come in with two duelling-swords under my arm upon that memorable occasion of the duel, but Ridley was as calm as — as an adequate butler. I rejoice in Ridley. If we fail to-day, I think I will ask his advice. He is a sound and solid

thinker. I hardly think I should have been a bishop to-day, but for Ridley. When I was a vicar of St. Mary's at Ray Pogis, he came to me, then deeply engaged in smashing Harnack into dust, and said: 'Sir, the Prime Minister is staying at Pogis House.' I knew if he was at Pogis House, he would attend New Pogis church. The incumbent at New Pogis was one of those men whom it would require much courage to make an archdeacon of, and he was under great obligations to me. I spoke to him. He fell ill most opportunely. I preached a sermon which had every appearance of spontaneity, though I had spent months upon it, keeping it by me for some such occasion, as it dealt with the duties of men in high position, and three months later I was offered Spilsborough. But for Ridley, I might still be a vicar. This, I believe, Bradstock, is Boston."

They left the train and began to make inquiries just about the time that Ridley was dealing with the duchess. He knew all about her, all about the duke, all about Penelope, all about Bradstock, and all about the "horde." He had read all the telegrams, those which were sent and those which he had picked out of the bishop's waste-paper basket.

"Yes, your Grace," said Ridley, "his lordship the bishop was called away early with Lord Brad-

stock on important business. He wrote a letter which his lordship has probably taken away in his pocket, and desired me to ask your Grace whether you would prefer to stay here or at the Grand. The Grand is comfortable, but this is quiet."

"I will stay here," said the duchess. "I should like to lie down at once."

And when she was comfortable, Ridley cross-examined her maid about everything, and was soon on firm ground.

"You may rely on his lordship," said Ridley. "With me at his back, he will be an archbishop yet. No, certainly not. The baby is not black if his lordship says so."

"But they do say she's not married and it isn't hers," said the lady's maid, shaking her head. "They say now that she has adopted it."

"When I hear of young ladies adopting infants in obscure parts of the country, I know what to think," said Ridley.

"Lord, Mr. Ridley, but I can't believe it of her," urged the maid.

"I am alleging nothing against her young ladyship," said Ridley. "She states it is hers. I said that if she stated that she had adopted it, I should know what to think. When she states it, I will tell you what I think. And in the meantime I may

say that I expect every one connected with this unseemly business to be here shortly. I am a man of some discernment. This adoption rumour will encourage these poor gentlemen, who are all mad, and they will follow her Grace here, or I am a mere footman in a poor family and my name's not Ridley."

It apparently was Ridley, for there was a very loud knock at the door.

"Mr. Ridley, will you see this gentleman?" said the footman, handing the butler a card, on which was engraved the name of Leopold Norfolk Gordon. "He seems very excited. I think he's a Jew."

"A Jew!" said Ridley.

"By the looks of 'im a Jew," said the footman. And her Grace's maid gave them a few details of Mr. Gordon's career.

"Oh, yes, of course," said Ridley. "I remember. Let him wait, Johnson. He can wait in the little room. As a Christian, I confess to feeling bitter against Jews, especially as I once borrowed money from one."

"This is a very nice one, though," said the lady's maid, "and Mr. Robert is quite fond of him."

"I cannot stomach the idea," said Ridley. "I thought better of the boy. But I suppose I must see what he wants, though I can guess."

He interviewed Gordon in the little room.

"I want to see his lordship the bishop," said Gordon.

"His lordship the bishop is absent on important business, sir," said Ridley. He added to himself, "As the butler of a Christian bishop, I object to calling him 'sir;' but as a butler in the habstract I must."

"Where has he gone?" asked Gordon. "Do you know?"

"He has gone to look for her young ladyship, sir."

"Ah! I guessed it! With Lord Bradstock?"

"Yes, sir, with his lordship."

"Which way has he gone?"

"I don't think, sir, that I should be justified in mentioning which way, sir," said Ridley.

"Oh, yes, you would," said Gordon. He put his hand in his pocket.

"I do not think so, sir. At least, I have doubts," said Ridley, with modified firmness.

Gordon took out a sovereign and scratched his nose with it.

"Which way?"

"Boston way," said Ridley. "Thank you, sir. But I do not think you can find him or catch him. Could I assist you in any manner, sir? Things

are mixed, sir. Have you heard the news that Mr. Robert sent?"

"What news?" asked Gordon.

"I 'ardly think I should be justified in repeating it, sir," said Ridley.

"Oh, yes, you would," said Gordon, as he put his hand in his pocket.

And Ridley told him all about everything. Gordon knew very little beyond the fact that Bob had sent a telegram to Bradstock, who had sent it to the duchess, who had published it on the wires that the infant was not black. And of course he knew the fresh London rumour that Penelope had adopted it.

"Her Grace the Duchess of Goring is now in the palace, sir," said Ridley. "And between you and me, sir, I should not be surprised if all the other gentlemen came. I suppose you heard of the duel, sir?"

"What duel?" asked Gordon.

"I do not think I should be justified in saying which duel, sir," said Ridley.

"Oh, yes, you would," said Gordon, thinking that a Christian butler was a very expensive person to deal with. And Ridley told him.

"You'll send me word to the Grand when his lordship comes back?" said Gordon.

"I should hardly be —"

"Of course, you would be," said Gordon.

"Very well, I will, sir," said Ridley.

Gordon went back to the hotel, and Ridley went back to the others.

"He's not at all bad for a Jew," he said, contemplatively, "not at all bad. I only hope that the Christian gentlemen whom I expect every moment will be as reasonable."

Before the evening was over, he interviewed with varying results Mr. Rufus Q. Plant, Mr. de Vere, Captain Goby, and Mr. Carteret Williams. He knew that Lord Bramber couldn't come on account of the illness of the earl, and he heard that Carew was down with influenza and delirious on the subject of Penelope. He told the others what he thought of them all.

"Mr. Plant is a man I should like to meet often," said Ridley. "I have heard people say unpleasant things of Americans. It may be true that they know little of cathedrals. I myself have heard an American speak of our best Norman harches as vurry elegant Gothic. I have known one voluble with hadmiration of a beastly bit of late perpen-dic'lar. But a man may know little of harchitecture and be a very worthy person for all that. This Mr. Plant has ways that I've heard described as befit-

ting a nobleman. My own opinion is that very few noblemen have ideas befitting an American millionaire. Dukes are often mean; earls also. I am acquainted with one viscount who is viciously careful. Mr. Plant is a gentleman far above the others, even above Captain Goby, who has a generous mind. Mr. Williams is peculiar, but, for a poor man, not mean. His second cousin, Lord Carteret, when I knew him, was as fine an open-handed, swearing nobleman as one would wish to meet. Mr. Austin de Vere is peculiar; mad, I think, about dogs especially. Young Mr. Robert told me he collected bulldogs. He said it with a wink which I did not understand. I wonder where his lordship is now."

His lordship the bishop and Lord Bradstock were both cross. They had drawn Boston blank, and found it too late and too hot to go on to Spilsby and Waynfleet and Burgh.

"Well," said the bishop, "we have proved a certain amount. She isn't at Boston."

"Nor at Windsor or Manchester or Bristol or Plymouth," said Bradstock, whose temper was rapidly going.

"I am surprised at you," said the bishop, who felt it necessary not to be cross when Bradstock was. "We have also proved that a yellow car

comes through here very often, mostly without disastrous results. She is farther north. We will go to Spilsby to-morrow, I think."

"I think I will stay at home," replied Bradstock, "or at your place, and I'll read theology."

The bishop raised his eyebrows.

"It will do you good, if you can understand it," he said, a little tartly.

"I do not expect to understand it," said Bradstock.

"Then why read it?"

"Only to see if the theologians understand it," replied Bradstock.

It was quite evident that events were proving too much for Bradstock. It was also evident that Bradstock was proving too much for the bishop.

"As a layman, you had better stick to Paley," said the bishop, tartly. "But let us return to Spilsborough. I own my temper is a little touchy to-day, Bradstock."

Bradstock's heart softened.

"Bishop, I apologize for touching it," he said. "Penelope is rather too much for me."

"She is too much for all of us, I fear," said the bishop.

They took the train for home, and, as they moved out of the station, a man in the waterproof clothing

of a chauffeur came on the platform. He was not wearing goggles.

"Bishop," said Bradstock, "that man is Geordie Smith."

"Do you think he saw us?"

"How do I know?"

"I didn't ask how you could know. I only asked what your opinion was," said the bishop.

"My opinion is worthless," said Bradstock.

"Dear me!" said the bishop, blandly.

CHAPTER XXIV.

England was excited, and London was more excited still. But Spilsborough was the most excited of them all. How it came out, no one knew, but the fact that the bishop was hunting for Lady Penelope Brading, who was married, who was unmarried, who had an infant which was black, which was white, which was adopted, was blazed all over that quiet episcopal town. Dean Briggs was very much annoyed, for the cathedral was no longer the centre of interest in the place. The clergy and the choir and the beadles and the tradesmen all discussed Lady Penelope. They stood in knots and fought and wrangled and argued till they were metaphorically black in the face. The lovers were pursued by gangs of boys who knew their names, and expected them to fight when they met, and followed them around in the hope of making a ring for them. All the world was aware that the duchess was at the palace. As a result, every one called

there who was on terms with the bishop. It is not at all surprising that rumour ran fast, east and west and south and north. It is not every day that a quiet cathedral town is the centre of a vast social cyclone. Boston and Spalding had their eyes on Spilsborough. Boston knew that the bishop had made an unepiscopal visitation there with a white-haired peer. Spilsby heard of it, and was jealous. Spilsby talked of it and began to wonder who the young married lady at the Moat House was. Spilsby wondered slowly. In Lincolnshire things move slowly. Lincolnshire is not fast. Folks there are rooted to the soil; they consider matters firmly and stolidly. And of course it has to be remembered that they belong to the see of Lincoln and do not think very much of Spilsborough. Spilsborough was all very well, no doubt, but Lincoln was older and finer and much more wonderful. Nevertheless, though the Lincolnshire folks are slow, they get there at last. It was all very well for Penelope to call herself Mrs. Bramwell. The Spilsby people began to see through the matter. In another month they would have solved the problem, and would have given away the solution by calling Mrs. Bramwell "Your ladyship." But this was not to be, for when Geordie came back from Boston, he went to Bob at once.

"Mr. Robert, the gaff is pretty nigh blowed," he said, earnestly.

"Is it?" asked Bob.

"Safe as houses," said Geordie. "I've my suspicions that the whole show is up the spout, or very nigh up!"

"You don't say so?" said Bob.

"Blimy, but I do say it," replied Geordie. "I saw that gaitered josser, the bishop, at Boston this very afternoon. Her ladyship will be spoofed and smelt out. Some one is givin' the game away. I don't trust that bishop."

"No more do I," said Bob. "He's very mean, Geordie. He encouraged me to follow you so that I could tell them where my cousin was."

"Bah!" said Geordie, "and they call him a bishop! Her ladyship wishes not to be found out, and she sha'n't be — by a bishop. I own I don't understand her ladyship's idea."

"I do," said Bob. "Suppose some one said you couldn't do something, Geordie, a hundred miles an hour for instance."

Geordie shook his head.

"I'd show 'em!"

"And that you wouldn't after you said you would."

"I'd show 'em," repeated Geordie.

"And that you shouldn't?"

"Shouldn't be damned, beggin' your pardon, Mr. Robert. I'd show 'em!"

"That's my cousin's idea," said Bob.

"And a dashed good idea, too," said Geordie. "I hate interferin' folks worse than policemen. I'd tell her ladyship about this here bishop. And Lord Bradstock was with him, sir."

"The devil!" said Bob, and he ran to Penelope bawling.

"I say, Pen, you'll have to go," he roared, bursting into the room where Pen was lamenting over her many griefs. "The bishop is after you. Geordie's seen him and Bradstock, too. And I feel quite certain that all of 'em will be at Spilsborough now."

"I won't go," sniffed Pen.

"Oh, but you must," said Bob. "You can't be caught here now by the whole lot."

"I don't seem to care," said Penelope.

"Oh, what rot!" cried Bob. "You won't break down now, Pen, just in the middle of the game. I mean in the middle of your idea. Just think how they'll crow over you and the baby."

That roused Penelope.

"They — they sha'n't!"

"Well, they will, unless you've got the one you

are married to here," said Bob. "Or are you going to tell me who it is?"

Pen snuffled sadly.

"How can I when we've q-quarrelled?" she demanded.

"Then we'll start at once," said Bob. "I'll tell Miss Mackarness and Tim and all of 'em, and we'll get your car and mine and we'll go somewhere else."

"But where?" asked Pen.

"What rot!" said Bob. "You've got heaps of houses; any of 'em that are deserted. Upwell Castle will do."

"So it will," said Penelope, helplessly. "But we can't go to-day, Bob. Baby is always asleep at this hour. Can't it be to-morrow?"

Bob shook his head.

"It's very dangerous, with the bishop on our track," he said; "it's very dangerous. He's very determined, except in motor-cars. In motor-cars, going fast, he's not at all determined. But out of 'em he's a terror. I'd go to-day."

"No, no, to-morrow," said Penelope, weeping.

And Bob went away.

"I wish Baker was here," he said. "Baker is quite as determined as the bishop, and his advice would be very valuable. I wish I knew how to

treat Gordon. I'm afraid he'll be angry. If he's angry, he may keep my money. Well, I don't care."

He told Miss Mackarness to pack up, and Miss Mackarness said she would. Miss Mackarness remarked that the world was not what she had imagined it when she was young. It had in fact come to an end. She said she was not surprised at anything and never would be again. She said she had never been in a motor-car, but wanted to be in one, because death seemed quick and easy in a motor-car. She also said that if she escaped, and Lady Penelope was killed, she knew of a good opening in a lunatic asylum for a woman without nerves, who could not be surprised, and had been accustomed to the ways of the highest society.

"Oh, yes, yes; we'll be ready," said Miss Mackarness. And Bob went away to instruct Geordie and Timothy Bunting, and he spent the whole afternoon, covered with dirty oil, dancing about the two motor-cars, while Geordie put them into first-class trim.

"We ain't going to be run to ground by a bishop," said Bob.

"Not much we ain't, sir," said Tim. "I'd sooner go in one of these machines, so I would."

It was the first time he had ever said as much,

and Geordie paid him a compliment from under the car.

"That's the first sensible remark I've ever heard you make, Tim," said the concealed chauffeur.

"Thank you," said Timothy. "I always said you were a good chap, Geordie, even if you was wrapped up in muck and grease." And an idea came to Bob.

"I know what I'll do about Gordon," he said. "I'll write something about this now so's to show it him afterward."

He wrote:

"Pen is very sad. I fear she has quarrelled with Gordon. I'm sure she has married Gordon. I wish she would let me send to him to come, but she has sworn me not to. I think the baby is very like Gordon. It is clever like him, only, being younger, not *so* clever. I don't mind if it is Gordon. Gordon has been very kind to me, knowing how poor the family is. I wish I was as clever as he is."

He read it over carefully.

"He's more jealous of Rivaulx than any one. I'll put something in about him."

He added:

"I think Rivaulx an ass because of balloons."

"That will please Gordon," said Bob, as he stowed his note-book away. "But I do wish I

knew who it is. Women are very fond of secrets. They seem to like babies and secrets best. Pen likes both together, and it's very confusing to any one."

They started next morning in the two cars for Upwell Castle, taking the whole household. Bob installed an old villager and his wife as caretakers. He had selected them himself on the ground that they seemed the stupidest people in the village. Bob was very clever, if not so clever as Gordon.

"I think we've spoofed 'em, Pen," said Bob.

Penelope hugged her baby and wept.

"Why are you crying?" asked Bob.

"I don't know," said Penelope.

"Then don't," said Bob. "It makes me very uncomfortable."

They devoured space, and Timothy held on to the car and to Miss Mackarness. Miss Mackarness said it altered her ideas. Tim said it didn't, but then he was very conservative.

"Now, let 'em all come," said Bob.

CHAPTER XXV.

Titania fell on Bradstock's neck when he came back with the bishop. She very nearly fell on the bishop's neck, too, which alarmed him very much indeed, though he had all that confidence with women which marks the celibate clergy, especially when they are beautiful.

"My dear-r Augustin," said Titania, "I came at once. I felt I had to. I felt I must. There is no sympathy at home for me in my troubles. The duke laughs, laughs in my face, and says Penelope is damn fine sport!"

"Tut, tut!" said the bishop, who was loath to think that dukes could use bad language. "I very much regret to hear it."

Titania waved her hands at large.

"But I do not care. I am wrapped up in woe, and in Robert. Where is he? Show me the telegram he sent."

They showed her the telegram.

"Not black! Oh, Augustin, that might mean anything."

"So it might. What did I say, bishop?" asked Augustin.

"Nonsense!" said the bishop. "I do not believe it is even dark. This is all waste of time. Time cannot now be wasted. This scandal grows. Ridley tells me all these unfortunate gentlemen, but Lord Bramber and Mr. Carew, are in the town. I have had telegrams from both of those asking for information, most excited telegrams. Mr. Carew says he is delirious with fever, and I believe him. Lord Bramber says his father is delirious, which I much regret. I think the son is also delirious, though he does not say he is. He implores me to remember that he is entitled to know first where Penelope is, as he is her husband. This is the telegram."

Augustin and Titania read it.

"If we could only believe it," said Titania.

"We cannot," said the bishop. "Ridley declares they all say the same. They also say the infant is an adopted one. I do not remember, in the course of all that wide experience which comes to a country clergyman in a place like Ray Pogis, any situation equal to this. As a bishop with a wider experience, I have seen nothing so absurd even in the conduct

of my clergy, who are indeed hard to beat in stupidity. I regret we did not go on to Waynfleet and Spilsby, Bradstock."

"So do I," said Bradstock, eyeing Titania.

"We will go to-morrow," said the bishop. "I have an intuition that to-morrow we shall find her. I feel sure of it."

"I will come with you," said Titania. "I must! I must! I cannot help fearing, Augustin, that the very worst may have happened. I have *now* no confidence whatever in dear, misguided Penelope's morals. I do not feel sure that the child is not black, or that it is adopted!"

"Good heavens!" said Augustin.

"Good heavens!" echoed the bishop.

"I haven't," affirmed Titania, dreadfully. "No such thing has happened in our family since the time of Charles the Second, which was lamentable but natural, and has long since been forgiven. I mistrust the general attitude of all these men, bishop. I mistrust it!"

"Certainly they seem in great distress," said the bishop.

Titania rose and looked awful.

"Only upon one supposition can I account for it, bishop. This is their remorse. They are remorseful. They have treated her badly, and she

has fled from them in her shame and will not see them!"

"Ha!" said the bishop, "there is something in that!"

"A great deal in it," boomed Titania, in her deepest tone of tragedy. "It explains everything."

But Bradstock said:

"Infernal nonsense, Titania! Bishop, I am surprised at you. They can't *all* be remorseful."

"Why not?" demanded Titania; "why not, Augustin?"

"Of course not," interjected the bishop, hastily.

"Why not, I ask?" repeated the duchess.

"Oh, well, you know," said Bradstock, "when you come to think of it, wouldn't *one* be enough to be remorseful for having behaved like a scoundrel?"

The duchess collapsed.

"Dear me! so it would," she said, weakly. "Now I come to think of it, one would be sufficient. Nothing is explained or can be explained till we find Penelope."

The same feeling of desperation inspired the lovers in the various hotels. Their hopeless passion grew upon them. The sense of mystery deepened. They were sorry for Penelope, for the others, for themselves. What did she mean by it? They

were all agreed now about the adoption theory, though they stuck to it manfully that they were married to her. Each one believed the infant was adopted, while he nobly claimed it as his own. They were really noble creatures, and showed themselves worthy of a better fate. A peculiar feeling of sympathy grew up among them, as it does among the unfortunate who are yet strong enough not to be overwhelmed. They spoke to each other again. Goby took De Vere's arm and walked about with him.

"I wish I could tell you all the truth, old chap," sighed Goby.

"Ah, so do I," said the poet. "A great passion is a wonderful thing, Goby."

"So it is, old chap," said Goby. "Do you remember the happy days we spent in your home when we read Browning and Shelley together, and you explained your poems to me?"

Austin de Vere sighed.

"Ah, they were happy days, when my nose peeled on the water and my hands were blistered by rowing."

"Do you remember the bulldog?" asked Goby.

"Ah, and the terrier he bit!"

"And the howling retriever?"

"And the bald, bronchitic Borzois," said De

Vere, with enthusiasm. "I bought them all of Bob because she loved him."

"I didn't like you then, Austin, old chap," said Goby.

Austin gripped his arm.

"Plantagenet, we will be friends always. Now I can confess that I loathed you. I told Bradstock so. I said you were an ass."

"So I am," said poor Goby. "I admit now I can't understand Browning."

Austin looked about him.

"My dear chap, no more do I," he said, in an alarmed whisper. "He's a much overrated man."

"I never overrated him myself," said Goby, sagely. "Look here, Austin. You know, of course, that I'm married to Penelope?"

"Of course," said Austin. "And you know that I am?"

"We'll quarrel about nothing now. To-morrow we'll look for her. Ridley, the bishop's butler, told me Bradstock and the bishop were going to Spilsby to-morrow. I gave him a sovereign."

"So did I," said Austin. "Let's go in to dinner. I'm glad we are friends, Plantagenet."

"So am I, old chap," said Goby.

At a near table to them were Rivaulx and Gordon. Farther off Plant was with Carteret Williams.

Plant regretted that Bramber wasn't there. Williams sighed for the artistic company of the delirious Carew. Not one look of envy or hatred or malice passed between any of them.

"Marquis," said Gordon, gloomily, "will you come to-morrow with me to find my — I mean, Penelope?"

"I will, my dear Gordon," replied the marquis. "To Spilsby."

"How did you know?"

"Ridley, the bishop's man, said it."

"He told me, too. I gave him five pounds," said Gordon.

"I gave him four."

"I'll bet he's told 'em all," said Gordon. "I say, marquis, those were jolly, happy days before this misery came on, when you and I dined together."

"And went up in balloons," said the marquis.

Gordon shook his head.

"Well, yes, even the balloons. Do you know, marquis, I hated you then. I don't now. I think you a real good chap."

The marquis held out his hand, and Gordon shook it.

"Gordon, I used to despise you. It was a great trial to dine with you. I'm glad I did it now. I'm

a wiser, better man for the trials. I see that Jews can be noble by nature just as they can be barons by creation. I finally absolve Dreyfus. I almost love you now!"

"Good old marquis," said Gordon. "When we get up to town, I'll put you on the betht thing in the market. I will, so help me!"

Carteret Williams and Plant got on well together. They talked first of Bramber and Carew.

"Carew's all right," said Williams; "all right for an artist. I was in the Ashanti war with an artist once. I put his head in a bucket of water!"

"Why?" asked Plant.

"Because he was too drunk to draw," said Williams. "He hated me when he got sober, and caricatured me. I never liked artists afterward. But when Penelope put me into harness with Carew, I found there was good stuff in him. He could work. He talked awful rot, but there was something at the back of it. I had to own it. How did you get on with Bramber?"

"I thought him a damn fool," said Plant. "But I found out he wasn't. There's stuff in Bramber. My — I mean, Penelope knew that. I say, as he isn't here, poor chap, will you come to Spilsby with me to-morrow?"

Williams started.

"How did you come to think of Spilsby?" he asked, suspiciously.

"The bishop's butler told me. I gave him five pounds," said Plant.

"I gave him two," said Williams. "Yes, I'll go with you, as Carew isn't here. I like Carew now. Poor Carew!"

"And I like Bramber, poor chap," said Plant. "And now I'll go and shake hands with the marquis, who wanted to kill me last time I was here."

"I wish I'd seen that," said Williams, simply. "I like seeing fights!"

They spent a happy evening together and talked of Bob. Austin was great upon Bob. And so was Gordon. Austin told them all about the dogs. Goby spoke about the spavined pony he had bought. Gordon told them how Bob had borrowed a hundred pounds of him to be put into something.

"I owe him fifty thousand pounds, at least," said Gordon. "The boy is a financier. I wish I had a boy like Bob."

And just then Carew walked into the room. He looked ill, but was as handsome as paint. Williams jumped to his feet.

"Oh, Jimmy, I heard you were delirious," he said, anxiously.

"I was," said Jimmy, "very delirious, extraor-

dinarily so. I'm not sure that I'm not delirious now"

He looked around the room anxiously, and drew Williams into a corner.

"Do you know anything about delirium?" he asked, anxiously.

"A lot about delirium tremens," said Williams. "Most of the artists I've been with in Africa had it. They said it was malaria. But have you been drinking?"

Carew shook his head.

"Not much, but I see the room is full of 'em!"

"Full of what?"

"Things, visions, phantasms!" said Jimmy, creepily. Williams looked around in alarm.

"You don't say so!"

"Yes," said Jimmy. "This influenza is awful! I could swear I see the marquis and Gordon and that ass Goby and De Vere!"

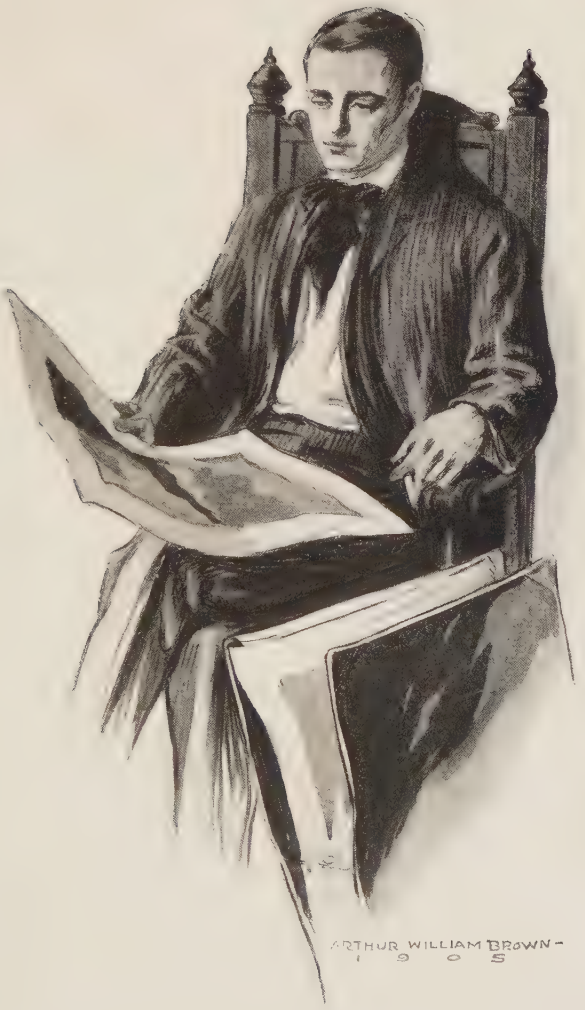
"Pull yourself together," said Williams. "They're here all right!"

"Are they real?" asked Jimmy. "They're not delusions?"

"Devil a bit!" said Williams.

"Oh," said Jimmy, "then I think I'll have some brandy. What are they doing here?"

"What are we doing here?" asked Williams.



JIMMY CAREW, A. R. A.
He was the best looking of the whole "horde"

"We're mad! Oh, but, Jimmy, I'm dashed glad to see you," said Williams, with a lurid string of emphatic war expressions. "Those were happy days when I learnt about art with you, and you learnt about life with me!"

"They were," said Jimmy. "But now I'm almost sick of art."

Williams implored him not to say so.

"Think of Rembrandt and Velasquez and Whistler!"

"I can't think of them. I think of Penelope!"

"Try to think of Monet and Manet," said Williams. "They'll do you good."

"To be sure, to be sure," sighed Jimmy. "I'll try to."

They talked till two in the morning, and the only man missing was Bramber.

"Perhaps he's chucked it," said Williams. "The last time I saw him he looked sick enough to chuck anything. But I suppose the old earl is so rocky he can't get away."

"I hate earls," said Jimmy, jealously. He added with extraordinary irrelevance, "But I'm glad she adopted him."

No doubt he referred to the infant.

CHAPTER XXVI.

While Pen and Bob and the baby were going as fast as they could toward Upwell Castle, Pen wept at intervals and hugged the child that all the "horde" were glad she had adopted.

"My only darling," said Pen, convulsively.

Bob shook his head.

"I say, Pen, I really don't understand you, you know! I say, this is rot! You mustn't cry; I can't stand it. And you keep on saying it's your only one in a very silly way. You irritate me very much, Pen!"

"Why, Bob?" asked the desolate creature at his side.

"You could stop all this if you wanted to!"

"Not now," said Pen, "since we've quarrelled!"

"Rot!" said Bob. "You tell me who it is and I'll bring him along. But I'm glad it isn't Timothy, you know."

Timothy was now with Geordie in the other car.

"I can't tell you," said Pen.

"Then don't snivel, please," said Bob, crossly, "or I shall drive into something and kill the baby."

"Oh!" said Pen, "oh, please don't!"

"I think it's very hard lines," said Bob, "especially as Geordie and Tim know, and Miss Mackarness. If they know, I ought to."

"I *had* to tell them, Bob. Besides, they knew him," said the incautious Pen.

Bob's eyebrows lifted, and he drove rather fast down the next straight bit of road.

"I say," he said to himself, "I ought to make something of that."

He thought very hard and did not speak for a mile. He thought all the more.

"Tim knows 'em all, of course. And Geordie may, though I remember his saying he didn't. But who does Miss Mackarness know? If I can spot that, I can spot the winner."

He went back to the time of Pen's youth, which he only knew by hearsay, as he wasn't much more than born then, and went through the list one by one.

"By Jove!" he said, suddenly, and Penelope started.

"Yes, Bob."

"No," said Bob, thoughtfully; "no, I'm not sure."

"What aren't you sure of, dear?"

"Him," said Bob, and Penelope sighed.

After another mile's silence, Bob spoke again.

"By Jove!"

"You said that before," cried Pen, irritably. He turned his eyes upon her, and she saw them full of strange intelligence.

"Oh, what is it?" she asked, in alarm.

Bob shook his head.

"You've told me who it is," he said.

"I haven't."

"You have," said Bob. "Pen, you're a wonder! I say, are all girls like you?"

Penelope said she didn't know, and demanded his meaning.

"If they are, they're interesting but trying," said Bob. "You couldn't have made more fuss about it if it had been Bunting. Pen, you are a wonder. Well, I don't mind; I like him well enough. He's all right. I hope Bill will like him."

"You are an annoying, irritating boy," said Pen, crossly. "And you know nothing."

"Bar him and Miss Mackarness and Timothy and Smith, I'm the only one that does," said Bob, drily. "I know you, Pen. You were ashamed of him, after all you used to say. All right, don't get angry. I'm all right. I'll keep it dark till you say

pull up the blinds. It's not my business. But I'm glad I know. For granny doesn't, and no one has guessed, not even Baker. And he's had great experience with girls in all parts of the world, just as he has had with dogs."

Pen wept.

"You are saying all this to worry me. How *can* you know?" she cried.

"I'll tell you some day," said Bob. "But because you haven't told me yourself, and have made me find out, I won't tell you who it is till I want to. But one thing I'll say, I don't think your brother Bill really likes him."

He whistled and let the car out till she fairly hummed. Pen was exceedingly cross, and hugged the baby, hoping that they would both be killed at once.

"I don't know what's going to happen," she said. "I've done my best, and nothing but trouble comes of it. If I had to begin again, I don't think I'd try to reform anything. I — I hate reform!"

In the meantime Miss Mackarness's ideas got sadly altered. She did not mind dying at first, but when Bob really went fast, it seemed to her that she loved life better than she thought.

"If I am to die," she said, "I would rather die in my bed, much rather. I want peace, and my dear

lady gives me none. This young wretch is no better than a murderer. He laughs. I can't laugh. I can't even speak. The wind stops my screaming. I want to get out and die quietly."

They pulled up close to a village to let a wagon loaded with long timbers get into a side road. Miss Mackarness seized her chance, and, opening the door, jumped to the ground.

"If you please, my lady, I'm going no farther. I will come on later in a cart."

Penelope remonstrated with her. Bob was urgent and impatient.

"We may be caught any minute," he said. "Pen, let her come on in a cart."

"If you prefer it," said Penelope.

"My lady, I much prefer it," said the housekeeper.

Bob let the car go, and Geordie, coming on behind, pulled up to interview Miss Mackarness.

"Sooner than go in one a mile farther," she said, firmly, "I would lie down and die."

"That's silly, ma'am," said Geordie.

"I would rather live silly than die wise," replied Miss Mackarness. "I may be used to much and past surprises, but I can't stomach these cars."

They left her in the road. And now they drove fast, for Bob set the pace, and made it a rapid one.

"I say, Geordie," said Timothy, about twenty miles farther on, "don't you think you could go slower?"

"How can I, with the other car ahead, man?" demanded Geordie.

"Well, I feels queer inside," said poor Timothy. "I'd rather ride a bucking man-eater than go another yard. Set me down!"

"Not me," said Geordie. "Be a man, Tim!"

"I won't," said Tim. "Set me down. I'll walk."

"Or come on in a cart," sneered Geordie. "Why, Mary here don't mind, do you, Mary?"

Mary did mind, but she adored Geordie, and said she didn't. She preferred to die with Geordie than to ride with Miss Mackarness in a cart.

"I don't care," said Tim; "if Mary wants to die in a blazin' fiery mass of petrol under a wreck, I don't. Let me down."

And Geordie let him down.

"A mad bull sooner," said Tim. "And, though I 'ates walkin', bein' a groom, I'd rather walk to hell than motor into paradise."

But peace was established in the cars by now. Geordie and Mary sat side by side, and whenever the pace was hot, she grabbed him so tightly that he remonstrated.

"My dear, I'd rather you hugged me when we go slow," he said at last.

"Lor', Mr. Smith, I wasn't huggin' you," remonstrated the blushing Mary.

"To an outsider it would appear so," said Geordie. "When a young lady puts her arms around a man's neck, it looks like huggin'. Mind I don't say I object, but I *might* run into the hedge."

"What a very amusin' gentleman you are," said Mary. "I've a very small opinion of Mr. Bunting except upon an 'orse. I'm surprised he preferred to walk."

"I'm not," said Geordie. "I expected it, and if we went really fast, you'd want to walk."

"Never," said Mary. "I love goin' fast. There's great po'try in a motor-car, Mr. Smith."

"Poetry, well, maybe," said Geordie. "To my mind, there's more machinery and oil. I wonder what the next thing will be with my lady, Mary."

"Ah," said Mary, "that's more than I can say. She's very sweet and kind, but I've give up tryin' to understand 'er. And such an 'usband, too. If I 'ad an 'usband, I'd like to show 'im off, if I was proud of 'im, and I would."

"Would you be?" asked Geordie.

"I 'ope so," said Mary.

"I guess you'd expect him to do what you wanted, like my lady," said Geordie.

"Oh, no, never," said Mary. "I'd do hexactly as I was told by 'im I loved. I don't believe in a woman 'angin' on a man and tellin' 'im to do this or that!"

And just then a mighty fine stretch of road opened before them, and Bob, half a mile in front, turned his car loose at the top speed. Geordie put his on the third, and Mary squealed.

"Hush your row, my dear," said Geordie. "Why, bless me, what's the matter with the girl!"

She had him tight by the neck.

"Oh, I'm frightened, Mr. Smith. Don't go so fast," she screamed.

"Lemme go," gasped Geordie, whom she was nearly strangling. "Lemme go, girl!"

"Never, never!" said Mary, settling on him tighter still. "Stop, stop!"

"I won't," said Geordie. "D'ye think I'll let that young un get away from me?"

"You must," screamed Mary, "or I'll get out."

"Then get out," said Geordie, rudely.

"Oh, you cruel, cruel Mr. Smith!" wailed Mary. "Let me down before I'm killed."

Geordie wrenched himself free.

"D'ye mean it?" he asked.

"Yes, you brute!" said Mary, "I does mean it."

He put her down there and then.

"You're no gentleman," said Mary.

"I never said I was," retorted Geordie, with his eyes on the vanishing Bob.

"And I hate you, you coward," sobbed Mary.

"There's a village a mile up the road," said Geordie. And he left her, disappearing in a whirlwind.

"Oh, I'm a sad, des'late, disappinted, jilted woman, with thin shoes and three and tuppence in my pocket," said Mary. "And I don't know where I am!"

She sat on a pile of road metal and cried bitterly. She took it much harder than the bishop did in a similar situation.

"Well, it can't be helped," said Geordie, "and I don't know that I'm sorry. She'd have proposed if I'd kept her at the second speed, I know that; so perhaps I'm well out of it."

He whirled after Bob and his lady, and soon caught them up.

There was peace on that car, too, for Bob hadn't been able to keep his discovery to himself.

"Yes, you're right, Bob," sighed Penelope. "But what could I do after what I'd said? And what can I do now?"

"Cheer up!" said Bob. "I'll fix it for you somehow. Do you know, Pen, I begin to think that after all women aren't as difficult to understand as Baker says."

They came to Upwell in the early afternoon, and were ignorant that the world was on their track. Bob sent a telegram to "Mr. Bramwell" as soon as they got there.

CHAPTER XXVII.

The bishop was excited. There is no doubt about it. Nor is it any wonder, for the sporting element exists even on the episcopal bench, and the hunting of Penelope was peculiar and choice sport. The clergy of his diocese were moderately tame, and when he pointed his episcopal gun at them, they said they would come down, just as the celebrated squirrel did when Colonel Crockett raised his weapon. Not for a long time had he felt so pleased with himself. He was quite certain that Penelope was to be run to earth in the neighbourhood of Spilsby, and, when he had found her, he proposed to speak to her like a father.

"I shall certainly suggest a religious ceremony in the cathedral," he said, blandly. "Oh, yes, I shall insist on it."

"You'll do what?" asked Bradstock, who was with him and the duchess in the early train to Spilsby. "You'll do what?"

The bishop rubbed his hands.

"As the one who christened her, I shall insist on a religious ceremony," he replied.

"Will you?" asked Bradstock.

"To be sure I shall," said the bishop.

"Did you ever hear of Mrs. Partington?" asked Bradstock, "or of King Canute, or of any other celebrated character in history or fiction whose insistence did not come off?"

"I scarcely understand you, Bradstock," said the bishop, with dignity. "I can hardly imagine that you mean to hint, not altogether obscurely, that Lady Penelope will treat any suggestion of mine with disrespect."

Bradstock intimated that that was what he did mean, and Titania, who had got up too early and felt like it, said that she expected nothing from Penelope now but the worst.

"I don't know why I am here, or why I am going there," she said. "I cannot imagine why any of us are doing anything but hiding our disgraced heads in the remoter parts of the country, while Penelope flaunts a black, adopted, illegitimate child in some peculiar part of Lincolnshire, while she is being chased on motor-cars by remorseful scoundrels, of whom I saw about a dozen as we left Spilsborough. Little did I think that I should be running after her with Augustin and you, bishop, while

the duke stays at Goring saying she is sport, and Robert is with her when he ought to be at home with Mr. Guthrie learning to spell. And as a result of Penelope's being away like this, that disgraceful Chloe Cadwallader, of whom I shall always have the lowest opinion, is living in her house in Piccadilly, and I dare say spending her money right and left. The marchioness said she knew, on the highest authority, that this was so. The marchioness always goes on the principle of believing the worst, though, of course, she hopes the best. I hope the best for Penelope, but I'm sure the worst is before us. I'm sure of it."

The bishop asked her to cheer up, and Augustin stroked her hand to calm her. But nothing calmed or cheered her.

"I am calm," she said. "I am even peaceful. What can be worse than the worst? I am cheerful, for I believe there is a better world than this, in which even a duchess may find some kind of rest on the highest authority. I shall be glad to go there, and leave you all."

"Don't say so," said Augustin.

"I do say so," said the duchess. "I say it firmly and with faith. You don't dare to deny there is a better world than this, Augustin?"

"Certainly not, in the presence of the bishop,"

replied Augustin. "Though, in looking out of the windows, I should not be surprised to learn that there is a more exciting spot than Spilsby."

For they had arrived.

"*I* will make inquiries," said the bishop, "while you look after the duchess in the waiting-room. I see that my wishes have been attended to. I telegraphed for a carriage to be in attendance, and it is in attendance. I will speak with the driver."

He spoke to the driver, who was much intimidated by the apron and the gaiters of the clerical dignitary.

"This is the carriage I ordered, I think," said the bishop. "I want to drive to — to Lady Penelope Brading's house. Do you know it?"

"No, sir," said the driver. "I never heard owt of it, sir."

"Dear me, dear me!" said the bishop. "Well, well! But that is easily explicable, my good man, for my young friend is in the peculiar position of having several names. This is rare; yes, rare I admit, but not altogether so very rare. Can you tell me if there is any one lately come to this neighbourhood known, let us say, as Mrs. — Mrs. Plant, for instance?"

"No, sir, there be not as I knows," said the driver.

"Or Mrs. Gordon, shall I say?"

The driver scratched his head.

"I never heard of her," he replied.

"How remarkable," said the bishop, smiling. "But I am not surprised. Indeed, in this last case I am almost gratified, though I withhold my reasons for saying so. Are you then acquainted with any one called De Vere? No; or with a Mrs. Carteret Williams?"

Light dawned in the driver's face at last.

"Mrs. Williams! Ay, sure enif. She do sell sweets and tobacco."

"Indeed," said the bishop, "indeed, how remarkable! But I don't think she will do. Have you heard of a Mrs. Rivaulx or a Mrs. Goby? Perhaps I surprise you in this part of Lincolnshire, but in London it is not at all uncommon for married ladies to have several names, not at all uncommon."

"No, sir, I never heard o' none of 'em," returned the driver, thinking that this gentleman talked most remarkable "cat-blash."

"Good heavens!" said the bishop, "this new custom is trying. Do you then know a Mrs. Carew or Mrs. Bramber?"

Again the man scratched his head and shook it. What did this strange person in gaiters mean?

"Oh! ah!" he said at last. "There be a Mrs. Bramwell at the Moat House."

"Indeed," said the bishop. "Perhaps that may be the lady. At the Moat House! Do you know Mr. Bramwell?"

"I've seen un," said the driver.

"What is he like?" asked the bishop. "Is he fair or dark, or tall or short?"

"He's fairish to dark and betwixt and between," said the driver, wishing to be accurate, "and mostly goes in big spectacles in his engine."

"Ha!" said the bishop, "we are on the scent! And what is Mrs. Bramwell like?"

"She do mostly go in the engine with specs on, too, sir. But my wife do say she be a very fine woman."

The bishop nodded.

"I think you may drive us to the Moat House," he said. "I will bring my friends out."

He rubbed his hands and congratulated himself on the skill with which he had discovered the object of his search.

"I really believe I have found her," he said, when he entered the waiting-room. "I really believe it."

"No!" said the duchess.

"Yes," said the bishop. "By a series of skilful questions and the exercise of a little pardonable

deceit, I have learnt that there is a Mrs. Bramwell here, who is said to be a very fine woman, and goes out in goggles in a motor-car with her husband, who is fairish to dark and tall and short and also wears goggles."

Augustin nodded.

"This looks like — something," he said, hopefully. "Bramwell! Perhaps really Bramber, Titania."

"No, no," said Titania. "I expect disaster. I anticipate the Jew or Williams."

"But Bramwell — the first syllable being Bram," suggested the bishop.

"I cannot build on Bram," said the duchess. "We are an unfortunate family. Lord Bramber may be an earl at any minute, and she has married a coal-heaver, of course! Let us go at once."

When they got into the carriage, the bishop told the man to drive to the Moat House.

"Did you say Moat House?" asked the duchess.

"I did," replied the bishop.

"Augustin, do you remember that Penelope's mother loved houses with moats? I think the bishop may be right. I tremble with nervousness."

She had more reason to tremble in a moment, for a big motor-car shaved them and scared the horse.

"Perhaps —" she cried.

"No," said Augustin, "it's Plant and Williams and Carew!"

The duchess gasped. And before she could say another word, another car swept by them.

"Perhaps —" she cried.

"No," said the bishop; "in spite of goggles, I recognize the marquis and Mr. Gordon and Mr. Austin de Vere. This is very remarkable, and not a little annoying. We shall all descend upon Penelope at once, and I fear it will somewhat disturb her. I should have much preferred to see her quietly in order to bring her to a just sense of her peculiar, and our painful, position."

When they got to the house, they found all the lovers but Bramber assembled at the gates. If it hadn't been for the illness of the Earl of Pulborough, he would have been there, they knew.

"Oh, which is it?" moaned Titania. "They all said they were married to her, and I know it's none of 'em."

The bishop greeted the crowd in the most courteous manner. He shook hands with those he knew, and bowed to those he hoped to know.

"I think, gentleman, that, with your permission, I will go in first and see Lady Penelope before any one else does."

And while he went up the carriage drive, Titania glared at the lovers.

"Don't look at 'em like that, Titania," said Augustin.

"Like what, Augustin?"

"Like a Gorgon, Titania," said Augustin.

"I look as I feel," said Titania. "I hate them all. I shall not be able to restrain myself when I see Penelope. I shall shake her. I shall say what I think. No, I won't be wise, Augustin! I decline to be wise. I am full of bitterness. From her earliest youth, she has been a thorn. And it is your fault; you encouraged her in reform, in anarchism. Don't speak to me! I shall explode!"

And Augustin got out just as the bishop rang the door-bell across the moat. Instead of the kind of servant he expected to see, he was greeted by a bent old woman, whose chief glory was her rheumatism, though her claim on Bob had been her stupidity.

"Is Mrs. Bramwell at home?" asked the bishop, with a beaming smile.

"Naw," said the old lady, not beaming in the least.

"No? Then when will she be back?"

"I don't know," replied the caretaker.

"You don't know! Will it be soon?"

"She never said," snarled the old lady.

"Did she go early?"

"Maybe an hour ago, maybe two."

"Will she be back late?"

"Eh? I'm 'ard of 'earin'."

"Will she be back late?" roared the bishop.

"She didn't say."

"What did she say, then?"

"Nothin' as I knows of."

"Where did she go, my good woman?"

"She didn't say."

"Dear me, how vexing!" said the bishop.

"I'm 'ard of 'earin', I tell ye," said the old dame.

"Who went with her?"

"All of 'em, so I 'eard."

"Who were they?" asked the desperate bishop.

"All as was 'ere. There ain't one left."

"Was a boy with her?"

"To be sure, a young gentleman as fetched me 'ere, and give me a shillin'."

"What was his name?"

"'E didn't say," said the old woman, and the bishop wiped his fevered brow and tried again.

"Was Mr. Bramwell with her?"

"I never seed un."

"How did they go?"

"In two engines."

"Ha!" sighed the bishop, "in two motor-cars."

"Likely."

"Will they be back to-night?"

"I 'ope not," said the woman.

"Why do you hope not?" asked the wretched bishop.

"Because of fifteen bob a week, to be sure."

"Then Mrs. Bramwell has gone, has left?"

"Ain't I been sayin' so this last hour?" asked the exasperated old person. "Me, with rheumatics, standin' on cold stones for hours arglin' that she and all have gone in engines!"

"Good heavens!" said the bishop, "she has escaped! She has eluded us! She has kept her word and has fled! This is remarkable; it is annoying. I feel nearer losing my temper than I have done with any one but the dean for the last ten years. I must go back and tell them."

He went back to the gate.

"Is it —" they cried.

"This is her house," said the bishop, who looked rather flushed, "but I have discovered by a series of skilfully devised questions that she is no longer here. Duchess, Lord Bradstock, marquis, and gentlemen, she went away this morning in two motor-cars with all her household, leaving behind her no

one but a caretaker who, in my humble opinion, ought to be taken care of in an idiot asylum!"

The duchess sighed.

"Then she has kept her word! Finding out that we are still pursuing her, she has fled from us. Oh, I think it wicked of her, wicked to all of us. When I get hold of Robert, I shall take steps to show him what I think of him. Do you give it up, bishop?"

The bishop's eyes flashed with indignation.

"Never!" he said. "I propose that we pursue her at once. She cannot have thought we should be here so soon. If we find out which road she took, we may yet overtake her."

"In what?" asked Bradstock, with his hand on the ramshackle landau the duchess sat in. "In this conveyance, for instance?"

The bishop looked at the two big motor-cars, and at their wretched owners, Plant and Rivaulx.

"Taking my courage in both hands," he said, bravely, "I propose that we lose no time. *I* will go in this car with the marquis, if he will take me."

The marquis said through his clenched teeth that he would.

"Bradstock, you will escort the duchess back to Spilsborough."

"Certainly not," said the duchess. "I am com-

ing, too. I must and I will. Whatever the condition of Penelope may now be, it is my duty. I come with you!"

"And so do I," said Bradstock.

They packed themselves in the cars, and moved away from the deserted house of the moat. In the village they soon discovered that "Mrs. Bramwell" had gone northwest by the road to Horncastle, and a moment later the bishop said, "Oh!" as Rivaulx fairly launched his car into space. Even Bradstock in Plant's car said something, and the duchess, losing the repose which stamps all duchesses the moment they become duchesses, uttered a scream. Gordon consoled the bishop, being very much pleased to find himself with one, by saying that he had been in a balloon with Rivaulx, and found him careful and very trustworthy.

"I do not think any one who goes in a balloon," gasped his lordship, "can properly be described by any such terms."

Williams said he didn't care if he was killed, as soon as Penelope had acknowledged she was married to him. Gordon, who was desperately scared of Williams, said nothing, but gave the bishop to understand by signs that the war correspondent was mad. Carew, who was still suffering from influenza, sat in his corner and wept at intervals.

In Plant's car the duchess and Goby and De Vere got on admirably. Bradstock sat by Plant and prepared to die. The duchess held Captain Goby's hand. De Vere said some poetry before the speed was very great. Afterward he said his prayers, and wished he was at home with his bulldogs.

"What does anything matter?" he asked, as he clutched Goby's offside.

And all of a sudden Rivaulx's motor pulled up so quickly that the bishop was nearly precipitated upon the road. A scared, oldish woman in respectable and sub-freak garments had done her best to get run over. Rivaulx swore terrible French oaths, and the bishop, who knew French far better than he dared acknowledge except in a literary conversation on Rabelais or *argot,* sympathized with him in awestruck silence.

"You accursed old lady! Why?" demanded Rivaulx.

"Hush, hush!" said the bishop, and, leaning from the car, he said: "It is all right, my good woman. I hope we have not alarmed you."

Miss Mackarness said they had. It was very hard to have got out of one car and then to be almost killed by another. Then the car behind came up, and the duchess looked at the lady who

had given her a little respite. The duchess absolutely screamed again.

"Augustin, it is Miss Mackarness! I remember her well!"

"Who the deuce is Miss Mackarness?" grumbled Bradstock.

But Titania paid no attention to him. Her eyes brightened. She became clever all at once.

"I remember," she said, "I remember!"

She called to the stranger in the road.

"I am so pleased to see you again after such a long time, Miss Mackarness," she said, kindly. "Are you still at Upwell Castle?"

"I'm going there now, ma'am," said the housekeeper, who didn't recognize her Grace.

"Are you walking?" asked Titania, kindly. "It is a long way to walk. You don't remember me, I see."

"No, ma'am," said Miss Mackarness.

"I am the Duchess of Goring," said Titania.

"Oh, your Grace! I beg your Grace's pardon, but, of course, you are," gasped Miss Mackarness.

"And I am going to Upwell now to see my niece."

Miss Mackarness gasped again and could not speak.

"To see Mrs. Bramwell, you know," said Ti-

tania, sweetly. "Of course, *I* know all about it, Miss Mackarness."

"To be sure, your Grace," replied her victim, not knowing what to do or say.

"Then *good*-bye," said the duchess. "I hope you will enjoy your walk, Miss Mackarness. It's such pleasant weather for a walk."

They left the poor woman in the middle of the road, an easy victim to the slowest vehicle in the county.

"Oh, I've done wrong, I know!" said Pen's housekeeper. "What shall I do now?"

"I said that on purpose," said Titania, viciously. "She has known all along, and ought to have told me. But now we know all about it, Augustin!"

"What about 'Mr. Bramwell'?" asked Augustin. Goby and De Vere turned pale, and the duchess threw up her hands.

"I might have asked her!" she cried.

"Captain Goby looked at her severely," said Augustin, "and so did De Vere."

Goby and De Vere denied it.

"Never mind," said the duchess, "this time she can't escape. We are on the track."

They passed a man a few miles farther on, and only Augustin noticed him.

"You are right, Titania; we are certainly on

the track. That man was Timothy Bunting," he said. "Pen has been shedding her retainers all along the road. I suspect Bob of furious driving."

A few miles farther, at the foot of a steep rise, they saw a young and pretty woman weeping on a heap of stones.

"I wonder if that is another of 'em," said Augustin.

It was Mary, whom Geordie had deposited on the road half-way between two villages.

"Have two motor-cars gone this way?" asked Bradstock.

"Yes, sir," sobbed Mary.

"Why are you crying?" asked the sympathetic peer.

"Because Geordie Smith is no gentleman," said Mary.

"That's Mrs. Bramwell's driver, isn't it? I know her well," said Bradstock.

"Yes, it is, and he ain't a gentleman. He drove so fast he frightened me, and I got out."

"How sad," said Bradstock. "We are going on to Upwell Castle now. Can we help you?"

"I would rather walk to Australia than get in another one of 'em," said Mary.

"You are right," said Augustin. "Titania, you are right. In half an hour we shall see Penelope."

"And I shall see Bob," said Titania, viciously.

But the bishop felt rather pleased with Bob now. He was in a car driven by Rivaulx. And Rivaulx was desperate. And when Rivaulx was desperate he lacked consideration for others.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

As all antiquarians know, Upwell Castle consists of two wings and a kind of centrepiece joining two civilizations and two divergent schools of architecture. The right wing is Tudor, and ruined; the left is Georgian, and habitable; the centre is nondescript and pseudo-Palladian. It cost a great deal to keep up, and nothing could keep it from falling down. Penelope's mother fell in love with it on first sight, and fell out with her husband about the price. Its value has fallen since then, for landed property is the only stable thing which always falls. There were pictures in it that connoisseurs gloated over, and some that picture-cleaners had restored till they were as valuable as a Gothic cathedral brought up to date by a resurrected Vandal. There were carvings by Grinling Gibbons to be seen, and some that were not by Grinling Gibbons. There were some rooms decorated by Adams that would have made Adam ill. There was an oak staircase there that a thousand intoxi-

cated noblemen had fallen down; there was another that no sober gentleman could go up. It was ruinous, romantic, and rat-haunted; tapestry waved in its corridors, ghosts loved its precincts; there was a room stained with something that the servants said was blood, and that the skeptical averred to be port wine. The only thing against the latter theory was that the dining-room was not stained, though some said it had been so flooded all over that nothing showed. It was a delightful place, and Penelope never stayed there. Miss Mackarness did, but then she was a Scotchwoman, and didn't count. Bob adored it, but then Bob was Bob, and nothing could change him.

"I'll fix this all up," said Bob, "and make her happy. She's silly. I'll blow the gaff, as Baker says. She's up-stairs now, crying her eyes out, and making the baby bellow."

He wandered about the grounds, and wondered where Mary and Bunting and Miss Mackarness were.

"Silly fools!" said Bob; "the idea of being afraid of going in a motor-car. By Jove, I wonder what's become of my man at Spilsborough! I suppose those people in Regent Street think I've stolen the car. What fun!"

He explored the ruined wing, and ruined it a little

more, and came out again into the Queen Anne garden.

"By Jove, I do wish I knew where they all were!" he said. "I wonder what granny is doing. Is she having fits, and Dr. Lumsden Griff to look after 'em? I think Griff's a soft-soapy ass. He says, 'Well, how are *we* this morning?' By Jove, all the rest of 'em will have fits, too. They *will* be sick. But I'm glad they're out of it. I wonder where Lord Bradstock is. He'll pull my wig when he sees me. And the bishop! Well, he's not a bad old boy. I rather like bishops, but their legs are queer. By Jove, but it's fun having skipped and done them! If they ever get to Spilsby and find us gone, they'll be mad!"

He walked around the corner of the house, and *paff* came a motor-car and made him jump. Another one followed like a streak of light. Bob went quite pale for a boy with a complexion like an ancient red brick, and made a bolt for the door. He was too late, for Bradstock and the bishop stood in his way. Bob slowed down, put his hands in his pockets and whistled.

"I say," said Bob, "how did you find this place out?"

"I own to being surprised and disappointed with

you, Robert," said the bishop; "very much surprised and greatly disappointed."

Bob wagged his head to and fro.

"Why, what about?" he asked.

"At your not returning, sir," said his lordship. "You treated me and Lord Bradstock, I regret to say, with great disrespect."

"I'm very sorry," said Bob, "but I couldn't help it. Pen — Oh, Lord! there's granny!"

The duchess intervened.

"Robert, where is Penelope?"

Bob hesitated.

"Gone to — t-to London for Paris and Marseilles and Australia," said Bob, hurriedly. "She said she couldn't wait, but had an appointment there somewhere. And she said I was to say she was sorry if any one called."

"Robert," said the duchess, severely, "do not keep your eyes fixed upon the distant landscape. Look me in the face. Are you speaking the truth?"

Bob wriggled and shuffled.

"No, I'm not," he said. "It's a beastly lie. But she did say the other day that she would go to the ends of the earth. And that's Australia, ain't it?"

"Bob," said the bishop, "this is very painful to me. Speak the truth like a man."

"I won't," said Bob; "it isn't *my* truth. I won't give Pen away to any one."

His vision cleared, and he saw the lovers ranked behind his grandmother and the bishop.

"Oh, Mr. Gordon," he cried, "do come and help me! Would you tell if you were me?"

"No," said Gordon, "no, of course not."

"I always liked you," said Bob, "so I won't."

"I command you," said Titania, looking at Gordon furiously.

"It's no good," said Bob, rapidly; "Pen's a great way off, far enough, that is, and I swore I'd never disclose the secret of her whereabouts to any one. At least, if I didn't swear it, I said it, and, if I said it, my lord, and broke my promise, it wouldn't be honourable, would it?"

"I don't care," began Titania.

"Would it, my lord?" asked Bob.

"I'm afraid not," said the bishop, "though perhaps in the circumstances, which are very peculiar —"

"Well, I won't," said Bob, "and that's flat. Goby wouldn't, I know, would you, Captain Goby?"

But the duchess waved Goby into the background.

"I mean to have the truth. Shall we listen to your foolish scruples now? If you won't tell us

where she is, tell us whom she has married. Is it one of these gentlemen?"

"I won't give any of 'em away," said Bob.

"Then you know?"

"Of course I know," said Bob.

"Ah," sighed the duchess, "then she *is* married?"

"She *says* so," said Bob, "and, if it's true, as I suppose, I know who it is. But Pen, before she went up — before she went, said I wasn't to speak."

Bradstock smiled.

"Titania, Penelope is in the house. Let us go in," he said, and he marched up the steps. Bob shook himself free from the duchess and darted indoors before Bradstock. He bolted up-stairs to Penelope, and burst in upon her like a whirlwind.

"Pen, they're all here, all the gang! I couldn't keep 'em out!"

"Who are here?" asked Pen, in awful dismay.

"All of 'em, and the bishop and Bradstock and granny!"

"Oh, what shall I do?" wailed Penelope.

"I'll tell you," said Bob. "Let's sneak down the back way and steal one of their cars now, and get away!"

"No, no," said Penelope, "it wouldn't be dig-

nified. I must be dignified, Bob, I must be; I will go down and see them."

"No," said Bob.

"I will," said Penelope.

"And tell 'em the truth?"

Penelope started.

"I can't, I can't, because we've quarrelled. But I will see them; I must."

She went red and white and red again, and once more as pale as dawn. She kissed the sleeping, adopted, illegitimate, normal-coloured infant as he sprawled upon an historic bed, and went to the door.

"Come with me, Bob."

"I'll hold your hand, Pen. I say, you shake!"

"Squeeze my hand till you hurt me," said Pen. "Now come!"

She swept down the big staircase, with Bob in tow, and found herself in the presence of the entire "gang," as Bob had called them.

"Penelope!" said Titania, recoiling.

"Oh, Pen," said Bradstock, advancing.

"My dear Lady Penelope," said the bishop, sweetly, "do you recollect that I christened you at the early age of three months?"

"No," said Penelope.

"No!" said the bishop, "no, to be sure, how could you? But I did."

"It — it was very kind of you," said Penelope. Titania recovered herself and advanced. Gordon and the rest hung about in the distance, looking as wretched as the ruined wing of the castle.

"Are you married, Penelope?" asked Titania.

"Yes," said Penelope.

"Of course she is," said Bob.

"Hold your tongue, Robert," said his grandmother. "And to whom?"

"I won't say," replied Penelope. "I told you I wouldn't, and I won't."

"I said she wouldn't," cried Bob.

Titania pointed her hand at the shrinking horde.

"Every single one of these gentlemen, to say nothing of Lord Bramber, who is with his invalid father at the present moment, came to me and said he was married to you! Every one of them without an exception!"

"I am very much obliged to them," said Pen. "In the circumstances, I think it was noble of them."

"Are you alluding to the advertisement in the *Times?*" asked Titania. "Are you aware that every one now says that you have adopted an infant?"

"What rot!" said Bob.

"Robert," cried his grandmother, "be silent, I command you. I will not be interrupted by you. Are you aware, Penelope, that it is said all over England and Europe and the blatant United States that you have adopted an infant?"

Penelope shook her head.

"It's the first I've heard of it," said Penelope, who was the colour of a rose.

"Is it true? Do not evade my question," cried Titania.

"I don't see, granny, what right you have to ask 'em," said the irrepressible Bob. "I sent you a wire to say it wasn't black, and it isn't."

"Augustin, silence that boy," said Titania.

But Augustin shook his head.

"Don't you answer anything, Pen," said Bob. "No one has any right to ask you anything."

He marched over to Gordon.

"Don't look so sad, Mr. Gordon."

"I can't help it, my boy," said Gordon. "It's a horrid situation. I don't care whether it's adopted or not. If she'll marry me, I'll have her."

Bob squeezed his hand.

"I ain't *absolutely* sure it isn't you yet," he said. "Pen hasn't told me all, you know. By the way, Mr. Gordon, did that speculation come off?"

"Not so well as I thought by ten thousand," said Gordon.

"Oh, I say," said Bob, "but, after all, it doesn't matter. I'll make fifty or sixty thousand do."

"You're a fine boy," said Gordon. "But, Bob, I would like to strangle your grandmother."

"Would you?" asked Bob, eagerly. "I dare say Pen does, too. Grandmothers and aunts are very trying. At least, I find them so."

The duchess's voice rose now quite above the limits of social decency, except when any one is playing or singing.

"I will not be put off, Penelope. You will say who it is, and you will be married again by the bishop in his fine Gothic cathedral —"

"Mr. Dean's cathedral," interjected the bishop.

"With a proper service and the usual hymns, breathing over Eden, or I will stay here till you do."

"Steady, Titania," said Bradstock. "If she won't, she won't."

"But she shall," shrieked Titania. "Gentlemen, which of you is it? I am now entirely desperate; which of you is it?"

No one said a word.

"Marquis, is it you?" asked the duchess. "You said so before."

"How can I say?" asked poor Rivaulx. "She says no one must."

"Quite right," said Bradstock. "Who will believe any one, Titania? Let's have lunch and be friendly and stop this. I'm very hungry, Pen. And let's see the baby."

The duchess shivered.

"I cannot and will not see it," said Titania. "For by all accounts, it is an adopted illegitimate child. If Penelope will send it back to the person she got it of, and own the truth, I will forgive her and have lunch, for I am very faint."

"I want to see the baby, Pen," said Augustin, with his hand on Pen's shoulder. "You know, Pen, they still say it's rather dusky."

Penelope was very indignant.

"He's not," she cried. "They sha'n't say it any more. Bob, tell that girl up-stairs to bring him down."

And Bob ran up-stairs like a monkey up a stick.

"I decline to see it," said Titania. "A baby without a name is a terrible object to me. It is an insult to the bishop and to the Church to bring one into the room. I will retire into the open air and try to breathe again."

Goby assisted her outside.

"This is a calamity," said Titania. "It's a cat-

astrophe. What is the truth, Captain Goby? Are you a liar, too?"

Goby sobbed.

"How can I say?" he asked. "You know I can't."

He looked out into the park.

"Here's some one coming in a motor," he cried. They all ran to the windows. But just then Bob and the nurse came down with the infant, who, though evidently awed by the number of creatures he saw about him, behaved like a gentleman, and not in the least like an adopted child.

"I congratulate you, Pen," said Bradstock. "The mother must be a devilish pretty woman! Does she miss it much, Pen? Oh, Pen, what a queer, mad darling you are! I begin to see daylight."

But nobody else did. Penelope blushed and hugged the baby tenderly, while Bob danced around her in the wildest state of excitement.

"I say, Captain Goby, come and look at it! Mr. de Vere! I say, marquis! Ain't it a ripper, and as fat as a pup, and hardly a squeal out of it day or night! Granny dear, won't you look at it?"

"No, no," said Titania. "I cannot, cannot bring myself to do so!"

"You'll soon be jolly sorry, I can tell you," cried the loving grandson. "I'll bet you'll be sorry."

He ran to Pen.

"I say, Pen, give the kid to me, or you'll drop it."

"Drop him!" exclaimed Penelope. "Oh, Bob, is it likely?"

"Very likely," said Bob, "if you knew that I sent a telegram to some one just as soon as we got here!"

Pen flushed scarlet. But not with anger.

"Oh, Bob!"

"I did! You ain't angry?"

"Oh, Bob!"

"I don't care," said Bob, as he took the child. "I don't care a hang. I'm ruined with all these jossers now. De Vere will never buy any more dogs of me. I say, who's that?"

A motor-car stopped outside the great hall door, and a gentleman in black got out. He came up the steps rapidly, and stopped dead when he found all the world in front of him.

"I thought so," said Bradstock. "Now the catalogue is complete."

"Lord Bramber!" cried the others. Penelope stood in the centre of the great hall as if she were

THE EARL OF PULBOROUGH
Clever; but indolent

turned to marble. But no marble ever had so sweet a colour.

"I believe it is now the Earl of Pulborough," said Bradstock, gravely, to the newcomer.

"Yes," he replied. "Penelope, you sent for me?"

Pen fell upon his neck before them all and did not deny it.

And, as they stood still in great amazement, Bob danced the baby up and down till that young gentleman made up his mind to roar as soon as he got his breath.

"This — this is Lord Bramber," howled Bob, triumphantly. "Now admit you feel sorry you spoke, granny!"

He gave the baby to the nurse, and grabbed Goby by the arm.

"I say, I'm awfully sorry, but it isn't my fault, Captain Goby, and Ethel Mytton is a very nice girl, and dead in love with you."

"Is she?" sighed Goby.

"Mr. de Vere, I've got a bulldog —"

"Damn bulldogs!" said De Vere.

Bob seized Gordon.

"Do you feel very bad, Mr. Gordon?" he asked, sympathetically. "I almost wish it had been you."

"It can't be helped," said Gordon, gloomily. "I

never had a chance. Come and see me in the city next week, Bob."

Rivaulx and Carew and Williams took their hats and slipped from the house, while Bob did what he could to soften things for them.

"I'll come and see you all very often," he cried. "Good-bye now!"

An hour later, when Titania had the baby upon her capacious lap, and said how certain she had been the whole time that Bramber was Penelope's choice, Bob walked around the garden with the bishop and Lord Bradstock.

"Oh, it's quite easy to understand," said Bob. "After all she said, you expected she would marry some outsider, and you see she took the pick of the basket, and of course was ashamed. Oh, I know Pen."

"You are a wonder, Bob," said Bradstock.

The bishop said that upon adequate reflection he was inclined to agree with Bradstock.

"Well, Pen's all right," said Bob.

THE END.

L. C. Page and Company's Announcement List of New Fiction

The Bright Face of Danger.

By Robert Neilson Stephens, author of "Philip Winwood," "A Gentleman Player," "The Mystery of Murray Davenport," etc. Illustrated by H. C. Edwards.

Library 12mo, cloth decorative $1.50

Stephens's most stirring story tells of the adventures of Henri de Launay, son of De Launay de la Tournoire, made famous in "An Enemy to the King." Mr. Stephens has done what Dumas did in "Twenty Years After," except that, unlike the great French novelist, he has written his best story last. Writing, as only he among modern romancers can write, of fair women and brave men, the gay life of the chateaux and the dangers of the road, hairbreadth escapes, thrilling rescues and gallant combat, Mr. Stephens has accomplished, without question, his masterpiece of romantic fiction.

"Mr. Stephens has fairly outdone himself. We thank him heartily. The story is nothing if not spirited and entertaining, rational and convincing. If there were more stories like it, the historical novel would be in no danger of falling into disrepute." — *Boston Transcript.*

"Mr. Stephens has a liberal share of the intangible verve and charm of Dumas, and he is at his best in 'The Bright Face of Danger.' It is a gay, dashing, youthful tale of dangers dire and escapes gallantly won. The situations are combined in fresh and captivating style. Things are kept moving swiftly, and the dénouement is effective." — *Chicago-Record Herald.*

The Prisoner of Mademoiselle. By Charles G. D. Roberts, author of "The Kindred of the Wild," "Barbara Ladd," "The Heart of the Ancient Wood."

Library 12mo, cloth, gilt top, with a frontispiece by Frank T. Merrill $1.50

In this charming tale Mr. Roberts has come back to the field of his first novels, — the land of Acadia. He tells a story which, although by no means a nature story, still has plenty of those vibrant nature-notes which have endeared his "Barbara Ladd" to its readers. Add to that scenes of tenseness and thrill which surpass those in "The Forge in the Forest," and one can see that here is a romance worth the name.

The Watchers of the Trails. By Charles G. D. Roberts, author of "Barbara Ladd," "The Kindred of the Wild," etc. With illustrations by Charles Livingston Bull.

Square 12mo, decorative cover $2.00

This is a companion volume to "The Kindred of the Wild," and is another collection of Professor Roberts's characteristic stories of nature and animal life, which stand alone in the world of fiction as absolutely sincere and truthful descriptions of existence in the untamed wilderness. They carry one far from the haunts of convention into the very depths of primeval forces, and present the savage instincts of the beasts of the forests and the elemental problems of living which attend those who live near to nature.

The book is sure to meet the favor accorded its predecessor and companion, of which a few of the criticisms are:

"Professor Roberts has caught wonderfully the elusive individualities of which he writes. His animal stories are marvels of sympathetic science and literary exactness. Bound with the superb illustrations by Charles Livingston Bull, they make a volume which charms, entertains, and informs." — *New York World.*

"Is in many ways the most brilliant collection of animal stories that has appeared. Well named and well done." — *John Burroughs.*

"No more perfect achievement of its kind has come from the hand of man." — *Chicago Tribune.*

"Incomparably the best in literature that has grown up about animals." — *Brooklyn Eagle.*

At Home with the Jardines. By Lilian Bell,

author of "Abroad with the Jimmies," "Hope Loring," etc.

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Here we have the heroine of "Abroad with the Jimmies" (a book already established in the minds of readers as one of the author's best) back to America, married, and trying to settle down. This book relates her experiences as a honeymooner, a flat-dweller, a housekeeper, and a hostess. Among her guests — as well as counsellors and friends — are her (and the reader's) old friends, the Jimmies, and her vivacious sister, Bee. These and a score of others — of whom the most prominent are Mary Jane, a new type of domestic, and "The Angel" — make up a pleasing group of folk with whom to pass a genial hour or so.

Of "Abroad with the Jimmies," the following are but a few of a great many favorable opinions:

"A deliciously fresh, graphic book. The writer is so original and unspoiled that her point of view has value." — *Mary Hartwell Catherwood.*

"Full of ozone, of snap, of ginger, of swing and momentum." — *Chicago Evening Post.*

". . . Is one of her best and cleverest novels . . . filled to the brim with amusing incidents and experiences. This vivacious narrative needs no commendation to the readers of Miss Bell's well-known earlier books. They will all read it, and they will enjoy it, and that is one of the safest prophecies we have made for some time." — *N. Y. Press.*

The Sign of Triumph. A Romance of the Chil-

dren's Crusade. By Sheppard Stevens, author of "I Am the King." Illustrated by H. C. Edwards.

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"The author has utilized to unusual effect the picturesqueness and fanaticism of the Crusading children in a story filled with eager charm and stamped with stern truth." — *Boston Transcript.*

The Green Diamond. By Arthur Morrison, author of "The Red Triangle," etc.

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"The Red Triangle" proved to be one of the most popular of the year's fiction. "Better than 'Sherlock Holmes,'" "Not to be laid down till the last word has been reached," "A first-class story of crime and mystery," are a few of the observations made upon it. This new story promises to be of equal popularity.

It deals with the adventures of a famous diamond, "The Green Eye of Goona," mysteriously stolen from an Indian rajah, and supposedly concealed in one of a dozen magnums of Tokay wine. An enterprising young Englishman, Harvey Crook, is the principal seeker for the diamond, and proves himself a worthy disciple of Martin Hewitt and Sherlock Holmes.

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The Hound from the North. By Ridgwell Cullom, author of "The Story of the Foss River Ranch."

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An Evans of Suffolk. By Anna Farquhar, author of "Her Boston Experiences," "Her Washington Experiences," etc.

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This is a powerful story of modern life. The principal character is a young woman who marries into a conservative Boston family without explaining her antecedents, and is obliged to exercise all her woman's ingenuity to keep unknown the existence of her father, who is the "black sheep" of a distinguished English family. She gradually becomes involved in deception, which grows more and more difficult to maintain, and which threatens to finally overwhelm her. The plot is strong, and the telling is brilliant, while the book has much of the author's gift of social satire, which was so cleverly displayed in "Her Boston Experiences."

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